



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



WEDNESDAY — 1 JUN 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	05/31 More delaying retirement due to inflation
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SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/retirement-inflation-saving/2022/05/31/id/1072331/
GIST	<p>As Americans grapple with increased prices for food, gas, and rent, the high cost of inflation is forcing some to delay retirement.</p> <p>According to the BMO Real Financial Progress Index, a quarterly survey conducted from March 30 to April 25 shows that roughly one-quarter of Americans will have to delay their retirement. The survey finds that 36% of respondents had their savings reduced, 21% were putting away less for retirement to keep up with growing costs, and among those most impacted by inflation were ages 18-34, with 60% responding "they had to reduce contributions to their savings."</p> <p>"We haven't seen this level of inflation in a very long time, and it's very daunting," said Paul Dilda, head of consumer strategy at BMO Harris Bank. Dilda adds that many in or near retirement may not have considered this surge of inflation in their financial plans, which has thrown off their budgets and timelines.</p> <p>"It's difficult to save, and these times are making it even more difficult," Dilda said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Forecast: another busy hurricane season
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/another-busy-hurricane-season-experts-predict-4814b0eb07acfe95ddf81c2232b15167
GIST	<p>Batten down the hatches for another nasty hurricane season.</p> <p>Nearly every natural force and a bunch of human-caused ones — more than just climate change — have turned the last several Atlantic hurricane seasons into deadly and expensive whoppers. The season that starts Wednesday looks like another note in a record-breaking refrain because all those ingredients for disaster are still going strong, experts warn.</p> <p>They say these factors point to but don't quite promise more trouble ahead: the natural climate event La Nina, human-caused climate change, warmer ocean waters, the Gulf of Mexico's deep hot Loop Current, increased storminess in Africa, cleaner skies, a multi-decade active storm cycle and massive development of property along the coast.</p> <p>"It's everything and the kitchen sink," Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach said.</p> <p>In the past two years, forecasters ran out of names for storms. It's been a costly rogue's gallery of major hurricanes — with winds of at least 111 mph (179 kph) — striking land in the past five years: Harvey, Irma, Maria, Florence, Michael, Dorian, Humberto, Laura, Teddy, Delta, Zeta, Eta, Iota, Grace and Ida.</p> <p>"That's the pattern that we've been locked into. And what a statistic to think about: From 2017 to 2021, more Category four and five (hurricanes) made U.S. landfall than from 1963 to 2016," National Hurricane Center Director Ken Graham said in an Associated Press interview in front of two hurricane-hunter planes that fly into the storms.</p> <p>Graham, echoing most experts and every pre-season forecast, said "we've got another busy one" coming. Last year, the Atlantic set a record for six above average hurricane seasons in a row, smashing the old record of three in a row, and forecasters predict a seventh.</p> <p>The only contrary sign is that for the first time since 2014, a storm didn't form before the official June 1 start of the hurricane season, but forecasters are watching the Eastern Pacific's record-setting Hurricane Agatha that looks likely to cross over land and reform as Alex in the Gulf of Mexico later this week.</p> <p>Here's what may make the Atlantic chaotic this season: LA NINA</p>

One of the biggest influences on Atlantic hurricane seasons occurs half a world away in the temporarily cooling waters of the equatorial Pacific, the natural cyclical phenomenon called La Nina, the more dangerous for the United States flip side to El Nino.

La Nina alters weather across the world, including making hurricane development in the Atlantic more likely. It starts with the Sahel region of Africa, where the seeds of the many of the strongest mid-season hurricanes, called Cape Verde storms, form. That often dry region is wet and stormy in La Nina and that helps with early formation.

One weather feature that can decapitate storms or prevent them from forming in the first place is high cross winds called shear. But La Nina pretty much deadens shear, which is “a huge factor” for more storm activity, University of Albany hurricane researcher Kristen Corbosiero said.

CLIMATE CHANGE

[Studies show that](#) climate change is making hurricanes wetter, because warm air can hold more moisture, and are making the strongest storms a bit stronger. Storms also may be stalling more, allowing them to [drop more rain over](#) the same place, like in 2017’s Harvey, [where more than 50 inches](#) (127 centimeters) fell in one spot. They [are also rapidly intensifying more often](#), experts say.

While studies point to an increasing number of the strongest storms because of human-caused climate change, scientists still disagree over what global warming means for the overall frequency of all storms. Some scientists see a slight decrease because of fewer weaker storms, but others, such as MIT hurricane researcher Kerry Emanuel, see an overall increase in the total number of storms.

A study by Emanuel found [a general increase in Atlantic storm](#) s over 150 years, with some exceptions. That increase is too large to be directly linked to climate change, Emanuel said, “but it could be indirectly related to climate change” especially if global warming is changing ocean circulation speeds as suspected.

WARMER WATER

Warm water acts as fuel for hurricanes. Storms can’t form until waters hit 79 degrees (26 degrees Celsius) and the deeper the warm water reaches, and the higher its temperature, the more the hurricane has to feed on.

And because of climate change and natural weather variables, the water in much of the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico [is warm](#) and inviting for storms, University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy said. In the key storm formation area, waters are about half a degree warmer (0.3 degrees Celsius) than last year at this time of year, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration hurricane seasonal forecaster Matthew Rosencrans.

LOOP CURRENT

In the Gulf of Mexico there’s a normal phenomenon called the Loop Current, where warm water runs extremely deep. That’s important because usually hurricanes bring up cold deep water when they go over warm water and that limits their strengthening. But the Loop Current often turbo-charges storms and it sheds eddies of warm deep water all over the Gulf for storm intensification.

This year the loop current seems especially strong, northward and worrisome, Emanuel and other experts said. They compared it to the Loop Current that intensified Camille in 1969, Katrina in 2005 and Ida last year.

On Monday the Loop Current was [1.8 degrees \(1 degree Celsius\) warmer](#) than normal, McNoldy said.

CLEANER AIR

Traditional air pollution from factories and cars — the dirty air of smog and small particles — reflects sunlight and cools the atmosphere, [scientists say](#). That cooling effect from air pollution probably helped decrease the number of storms in the 1970s and 1980s, which was a quiet period in the Atlantic.

But since Europe and the United States cleaned up much of their air pollution, the Atlantic has gotten stormier during hurricane season, while just the opposite is happening in Asia where air pollution is increasing, a new study said. Experts said the decrease in air pollution and increase in Atlantic storms is likely a permanent condition now.

LONGER TERM CYCLES

Hurricane researchers have noticed over a century or so, an on-off type of cycle of storm activity with about 20 to 30 years of busy Atlantic hurricane seasons followed by 20 to 30 years of less activity. The current busy cycle started in 1995 and should theoretically be ending soon, but scientists see no sign of that happening yet.

The theory behind the cycle has to do with ocean currents, salinity and other natural cycles on a global scale. But recently some scientists have started to doubt how big a factor, if any, the cycle may be and whether it was really air pollution and now climate change altering the cycle.

DEVELOPMENT

On top of all those weather factors is the problem of humans. During the lull in storms in the 1970s and 1980s, air conditioning in the south became more prevalent and storms were in the back of the mind, so more people moved to and built in storm prone areas, said former NOAA hurricane scientist Jim Kossin, now of the risk firm The Climate Service.

But the storms came back when the pollution disappeared and as climate change worsened. Add in La Ninas, insurance that makes it easier to rebuild in dangerous areas, “and now we’re paying the piper” with more and fiercer storms and more people and buildings at risk,” Kossin said.

For at least the next five years, Kossin said, “we need to buckle up.”

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HEADLINE	06/01 Painful preview of summer air travel?
SOURCE	https://www.axios.com/2022/06/01/air-delays-summer
GIST	<p>If last weekend was any indication, we're in for a turbulent summer for air travel, with staff shortages and severe weather interrupting our long-delayed getaways.</p> <p>Why it matters: The summer of revenge travel is pushing up against the limits of airlines' capability to recover from the two-year pandemic. Passengers should be prepared for fewer choices, higher prices and more delays.</p> <p>Driving the news: U.S. airlines canceled more than 2,800 flights over the Memorial Day weekend, according to FlightAware.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bad weather in Florida, New York and the mid-Atlantic was a factor, along with air traffic control and staffing issues, airlines say.• In Austin, Texas, security lines snaked outside the airport, and some desperate travelers even abandoned their rental cars, Axios Austin reported. <p>It's not just Americans suffering through travel hell. Passengers in Europe are waiting for hours to get through security or immigrations too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The security line at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, one of the world's busiest, stretched so far out of the building over the weekend that Dutch airline KLM temporarily halted new reservations. The airport even urged passengers to stay home. <p>Flashback: We've seen airline meltdowns before, as carriers struggled to meet demand that bounced back more quickly than expected in the summer and fall of 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This year, airlines have had plenty of time to prepare, even expanding their schedules ahead of a forecasted summer 2022 travel surge.

Yes, but: Labor shortages across the board — pilots, gate agents, baggage handlers, ground crews — are causing carriers to rethink those plans.

- Almost all major U.S. airlines have proactively cut their schedules, some by as much as 15%, acknowledging that their operations are already stretched to the brink.
- [COVID-19 outbreaks](#) among airline and airport workers are exacerbating the staffing crisis.

Between the lines: It doesn't take long for a staff shortage in one airport to ripple across the entire country.

- If there aren't enough ground workers in Cleveland, for example, to unload bags and service a plane, the aircraft will be stuck there, instead of heading to its next stop in, say, San Francisco.
- People waiting for a flight from San Francisco to Los Angeles will then be delayed too.
- Flight crews have limits on the amount of time they can be on duty without a rest, and sometimes they "time out" during such delays. Unless another crew can take over, those time-outs can force cancellations.
- Airlines "don't have the bench crew that they used to," Madhu Unnikrishnan, editor of Skift's Airline Weekly, tells Axios.

Compounding the labor shortage is that more people are heading to or passing through areas that are seeing more severe weather, according to the [Federal Aviation Administration](#).

- In Florida, for example, traffic is 150% to 170% higher at some airports compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- The Sunshine State is also seeing more frequent thunderstorms, causing "significantly more weather delays in the area than normal," per the FAA.

The bottom line: There are a few things you can do to minimize headaches, The Points Guy CEO Brian Kelly tells Axios.

- Book direct flights whenever possible: "A 45-minute layover is just a recipe for disaster," he says.
- Enroll in TSA PreCheck or Global Entry to save time at security or customs.
- If your flight is canceled, seek help from your credit card provider, which could be faster than dealing with an overburdened airline.
- Take advantage of technology like self-tagged bags, facial recognition security systems or CLEAR's new [security reservation lane](#) to speed through the lines.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Policymakers misjudged inflation threat
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/us-policymakers-misjudged-inflation-threat-until-it-was-too-late/ar-AAXTk1Z?ocid=uxbndlbing
GIST	<p>Prices for just about everything Americans buy — gas, groceries, housing, cars, clothes, even TVs — have spiked in the past two years. Inflation, which had been scarcely noticeable for decades, is suddenly the top concern most people have about the economy.</p> <p>And it all seemed to catch Washington by surprise.</p> <p>On July 19, 2021, President Biden played down the risk of persistent inflation, telling reporters that price hikes “are expected to be temporary.” This month, Biden called reining in prices his “top domestic priority.”</p> <p>What changed?</p> <p>A combination of factors including surges in the coronavirus, supply chain problems, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and a dramatic shift in consumer spending patterns, all made things more expensive. It didn’t help that the increases began in uneven and seemingly disconnected ways. Housing prices went up, initially, because the pandemic changed where people wanted to live. Rental car prices went up, in part, because companies sold off their fleets when tourism dipped. But eventually these one-off developments fused to</p>

create a much broader calamity, rattling the economic and political foundations of the country — making clear policymakers had failed to recognize the mounting inflationary crisis.

Here's a look back at what the top economic officials in the White House and the Federal Reserve were saying and doing about the problems as they developed, and how they fell behind:

1. February 2021: Biden emphasizes risk of insufficient stimulus

In the State Dining Room of the White House on Feb. 5, [President Biden](#) argues that the U.S. economy faces a bigger risk from doing too little to fight the downturn than doing too much. His administration had been pushing a large stimulus plan intended to reduce unemployment, inject new firepower into the anemic job market and quickly grow the economy. “If we make these investments now, with interest rates at historic lows, we’ll generate more growth, higher incomes, a stronger economy, and our nation’s finances will be in a stronger position as well,” Biden says. “So, the way I see it: The biggest risk is not going too big, if we go — it’s if we go too small.”

Biden is talking about injecting nearly \$2 trillion in new federal spending into the faltering economy, [even as some](#) question the total, coming so soon after previous stimulus efforts, [citing the risk of inflation](#).

About two weeks later, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell says the money the government is spending on stimulus and covid relief shouldn't be a problem. “I really do not expect we’ll be in a situation where inflation rises to troublesome levels,” [Powell tells the Senate Banking Committee](#), as Congress nears approval of Biden’s \$1.9 trillion stimulus plan. “This is not a problem for this time.” A “burst” of new spending shouldn't cause unwanted inflation, he [says](#).

2. March 2021: Biden signs stimulus, but criticism emerges

On March 11, Biden signs into law a \$1.9 trillion economic relief plan, the American Rescue Plan, that had been passed by Congress only with Democratic votes. Despite united GOP opposition and warnings from some centrist economists, Democrats approve hundreds of billions of dollars in new stimulus checks, state aid, extended unemployment benefits and a host of other measures. “This historic legislation is about rebuilding the backbone of this country and giving people in this nation — working people and middle-class folks, the people who built the country — a fighting chance,” [Biden says](#) in the Oval Office. Soon, the government [starts sending new \\$1,400 checks](#) to millions of Americans, the third round of stimulus payments following two under former president Donald Trump.

Three days later, the Biden administration’s top economic thinker downplays the potential danger of rising prices. “Is there a risk of inflation? I think there’s a small risk,” Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen [says on ABC’s “This Week.”](#) “So I don’t think it’s a significant risk.” Yellen also says prices may appear artificially high due to the collapse of demand during the coronavirus pandemic, but that those changes were not likely persistent. “Prices fell a lot last spring, when the pandemic surged. I expect some of those prices to move up again, as the economy recovers the spring and summer. But that’s a temporary movement in prices,” Yellen says, previewing the administration’s argument over the next several months.

Not everyone is convinced. In a March 15 op-ed in The Washington Post, former Obama White House economic adviser Lawrence H. Summers [criticizes the Fed](#) and predicts “stagflation and recession” in 2022. He says Fed officials are engaging in wishful thinking if they don’t worry about inflation. “I believe the Fed has not internalized the magnitude of its errors over the past year, is operating with an inappropriate and dangerous framework, and needs to take far stronger action to support price stability than appears likely.” Summers says unemployment and inflation will both average over 5 percent over the next few years, and that policies will lead “ultimately to a major recession.” One early indicator emerges that Summers might be right: Overall inflation remains low, but [prices for used cars skyrocket](#), up 17 percent since the pre-vaccine summer of [2020](#).

3. May 2021: Yellen rattles markets

Yellen says that the Federal Reserve may need to respond to rising prices, leading to a brief panic in the stock market and, later, a clarification from the treasury secretary. “It may be that interest rates will have

to rise somewhat to make sure our economy does not overheat,” Yellen says at a [forum sponsored by the Atlantic on May 4](#).

After the stock market dips, Yellen tells the Wall Street Journal at a separate event the same day: “I don’t think there’s going to be an inflationary problem, but if there is, the Fed can be counted on to address them.”

Vaccines for the coronavirus are distributed more widely, fueling new hope that the economy may begin to gain steam. The April [unemployment rate remains lackluster](#), but the jobs market begins to improve [in May](#).

4. June 2021: Yellen says inflation could hit 3 percent; the Fed predicts rate hikes

At a meeting of Group of Seven finance ministers in London on June 5, Yellen [acknowledges for the first time](#) that inflation could wind up running higher than expected. “We have in recent months seen some inflation, and we — at least on a year-over-year basis — will continue, I believe through the rest of the year, to see higher inflation rates, maybe around 3 percent,” she said. “But I personally believe that this represents transitory factors.”

On June 16, the Fed revises forecasts for inflation, predicting a 3.4 percent rate by late 2021, up significantly from its previous estimate. “Inflation could turn out to be higher and more persistent than we expect,” [Powell says](#) at a news conference. The bank keeps interest rates near zero but signals that it might raise them sooner than anticipated. Government statistics show the employment picture improving, with 559,000 new jobs added in May, but Republicans say pandemic-driven increases in unemployment benefits are keeping employees home instead of working.

5. July 2021: Biden calls inflation ‘temporary’

July marks a turning point for the labor market, [with nearly a million jobs created](#), as stimulus benefits and more generous unemployment continue to flow through the economy. On the White House lawn, [Biden declares](#) that the nation is “closer than ever to declaring our independence from a deadly virus,” even though the delta variant is already raising alarm in other countries.

The first Child Tax Credit payments go out on July 15, with households getting monthly checks of a few hundred dollars.

Prices are also beginning [to rise more quickly](#), especially for groceries, gas and rent. Biden seeks to reassure the country by arguing that inflation won’t prove long-lasting. On July 19, he acknowledges that [“we’ve seen some prices increases”](#) but dismisses the views of economists who think the problem amounts to a more serious threat. “Some folks have raised worries that this could be a sign of persistent inflation. But that’s not our view. Our experts believe and the data shows that most of the price increases we’ve seen are — were expected and expected to be temporary,” Biden says.

6. August-September 2021: Price hikes ease, job growth appears to slow as delta spreads

The Fed and the White House maintain that supply chain glitches related to the pandemic are making it hard for businesses to keep up with rising consumer demand. They insist that when things return to normal, prices will fall again, too. “One month does not make a trend ... and we know supply constraints persist in various sectors,” the White House Council of Economic Advisers tweets.

Biden administration officials also call for oil companies to boost production to ease gas costs. Used car prices — the early indicator of inflation problems in the spring — are up even more, and now stand [41.7 percent higher](#) than they were a year ago.

Meanwhile, as the delta variant rages, the [economy looks like it could be stumbling](#). The initial draft of the August jobs report, released on Sept. 3, shows a [disappointing 235,000 jobs added](#), far below economists’ projections and a steep drop from earlier in the summer. Biden [acknowledges the somber news](#) but projects optimism: “While I know some wanted to see a larger number today, and so did I, what we’ve seen this year is a continued growth, month after month, in job creation.”

In one bright spot, August inflation data comes [in lower than July](#), breaking an eight-month rising streak and giving policymakers new hope that prices could be topping out. The Council of Economic Advisers calls the news “[encouraging](#)” but notes that inflation could rise or fall in coming months.

The data suggesting both slowing jobs growth and inflation gives policymakers some sense that there’s not a pressing need to tamp the brakes to keep the economy from overheating.

7. October 2021: More signs the economy may be slowing

Economists had forecast 500,000 jobs would be added in September, but the initial report released on Oct. 8 says only [194,000 were created](#), not enough to get to full employment for a while. The unemployment rate drops to 4.8 percent, but large numbers of people, especially women, leave the labor force as the pandemic drags on. Gross domestic product [growth drops](#) in the third quarter, but experts say 2021 is still on track to show the fastest overall growth in the economy since 1984.

8. November 2021: Inflation no longer looks temporary; job growth is revealed to be much stronger than reported

The Fed [moves on Nov. 3](#) to ease off its massive purchases of bonds, which has helped keep interest rates low and stimulate the economy. Powell says the Fed won’t let inflation become permanent and that the bank will use its tools to prevent higher prices from becoming entrenched, but he notes “sizable price increases in some sectors” and says inflation and supply chain disruptions “will persist” into 2022.

When the Bureau of Labor Statistics issues revised estimates for June through September, it’s suddenly clear that the government’s initial reports underestimated employment growth by some 626,000 new jobs — the [largest underestimate](#) of any comparable period dating back more than 40 years. What looked over the summer like a slowing recovery turns out to have been an economy that was still sizzling hot.

Initial estimates for October also show the [economy added 531,000 jobs](#), with the unemployment rate dropping to 4.6 percent. Wages push higher as well, despite continued supply-chain backups: [A lagging government report](#) shows that a record 4.4 million people quit their jobs in September, motivated by the chance to find better pay elsewhere. By late November, the number of weekly unemployment claims hits [a 50-year low](#) of 199,000.

Recognition of the roaring job market comes with the realization that inflation is also soaring — and may not be temporary. Spikes in energy prices and problems with supply chains drive prices up by 6.2 percent compared with October 2020, the [biggest inflation jump](#) in about 30 years. When the data comes out on Nov. 10, Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) warns the White House that Washington “can no longer ignore the economic pain Americans feel every day.”

Biden says “reversing this trend is a top priority for me,” but administration officials still argue that supply chain issues are causing temporary price hikes. The White House is optimistic that inflation could soon cool, and Biden signs a [\\$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill](#) into law in a South Lawn ceremony on Nov. 15. The spending deal, a culmination of months of difficult negotiations with Republican lawmakers, represents a key win for the administration’s economic agenda after months of criticisms over rising prices. “This law is a blue-collar blueprint to rebuild America. It leaves no one behind,” [Biden says](#).

By the end of November, the Fed backs away from the idea that inflation is “transitory.” Powell tells a Senate Banking Committee hearing on Nov. 30 that it’s “probably a good time to retire that word and try to explain more clearly what we mean.” Earlier that month, he [emphasizes that](#) Federal Reserve officials “understand completely that it’s particularly people who are living paycheck to paycheck or seeing higher grocery costs, higher gasoline costs — when the winter comes, higher heating costs for their homes. We understand completely what they’re going through.”

9. December 2021: Inflation hits 40-year high; Fed says rate hikes are coming; Biden’s Build Back Better agenda looks dead

Inflation data released on Dec. 10 shows a 6.8 percent increase compared to the year before, the [largest jump since 1982](#). Prices are up in just about every sector, from pork, poultry and produce, to housing and sporting goods. Biden touts his Build Back Better social spending bill as a way to help families keep up with rising prices, but Republicans say the administration's economic policies are causing, not easing, inflation.

The next week, the Fed shifts its policy focus from unemployment, which has remained near record lows, to inflation, which is a more serious danger. "There's a real risk now, we believe — I believe — that inflation may be more persistent," [Powell tells reporters](#) on Dec. 15. "The risk of higher inflation becoming entrenched has certainly increased. I don't think it's high at this moment, but I think it's increased." He says the Fed will finish tapering its asset purchases by March and raise rates after that.

That weekend, Manchin crushes White House hopes of passing a sweeping economic package after a rift emerges between him and the president. Manchin repeatedly cites his concerns with rising prices and blames excessive federal spending. "My Democratic colleagues in Washington are determined to dramatically reshape our society in a way that leaves our country even more vulnerable to the threats we face," [Manchin says in a statement](#) on Dec. 19. "I cannot take that risk with a staggering debt of more than \$29 trillion and inflation taxes that are real and harmful to every hard-working American at the gasoline pumps, grocery stores and utility bills with no end in sight."

At year end, Biden's signature economic measure, the enhanced Child Tax Credit, expires amid a broader standoff over the White House domestic agenda. Republicans and Manchin blame the child tax credit for pushing up inflation. But its expiration leads child poverty to jump more than 50 percent, researchers at Columbia University [later estimate](#).

10. February 2022: Russia invades Ukraine, sending food and energy prices soaring

After a months-long buildup, [Russia attacks Ukraine](#) with ground forces, missiles and aircraft. Western governments initially expect Kyiv to fall quickly. They impose immediate economic sanctions on Russia and President Vladimir Putin, especially targeting Russian energy sales to Europe. Additional sanctions roll out over the next few weeks, as Ukrainian resistance to the invasion is stronger than expected — and Russian military competence lower than the West had feared.

The sanctions aim to cripple Russia's economy. But the fallout and the effects of the war spread widely, spiking global prices for oil, natural gas and food, especially grain and cooking oils. The invasion partly dashes the White House's hopes for quickly cooling inflation.

11. March 2022: Fed raises interest rates for the first time since 2018

Hoping to curb inflation, the central bank raises interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point on March 16. "Inflation is likely to take longer to return to our price stability goal than previously expected," Powell [says at a news conference](#) after meeting with the central bank's policymakers. The central bank says it expects seven interest rate hikes in 2022 — up from its previous projection of three — and predicts inflation could fall to 4.3 percent by the end of December.

12. May 2022: Inflation is 'much too high,' Powell says; Fed raises rates again

After four years with no interest rate increases, the Fed hikes them again on May 4, this time by a half percentage point, the sharpest hike in more than 20 years. "Inflation is much too high," [Powell says](#). The Fed also announces plans to shrink its \$9 trillion balance sheet.

The latest inflation report for April shows a slight easing [to 8.3 percent compared to a year earlier](#), showing some of the slowest gains in months. But inflation remains near 40-year highs with a long way to fall before Americans feel relief.

Despite the administration's initial posture, the White House is forced to acknowledge voter discomfort with rising prices. "I want every American to know that I'm taking inflation very seriously and it's my top domestic priority," [Biden says](#) on May 10. Still, he insists the causes are unrelated to his administration's

fiscal policy. “There are two leading causes of inflation we’re seeing today. The first cause of inflation is a once-in-a-century pandemic,” he says. “This year we have a second cause — Mr. Putin’s war in Ukraine.”

The [Senate votes 80 to 19 on May 12 to confirm](#) Biden’s nomination of Powell to a second term as Fed chair, despite questions about whether the Fed has moved quickly enough to tackle rising inflation. The same day, [Powell tells Marketplace](#) that the bank probably should have acted faster.

“If you had perfect hindsight you’d go back,” he says, “and it probably would have been better for us to have raised rates a little sooner.”

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HEADLINE	06/01 Russia oil producers step ahead sanctions
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-oil-producers-stay-one-step-ahead-of-sanctions-11654076614
GIST	<p>Europe just targeted Russian crude with its toughest sanctions yet, but shippers and refiners are getting the oil to market by obscuring its origins. Some fuels believed to be partially made from Russian crude landed in New York and New Jersey last month.</p> <p>The cargoes were brought through the Suez Canal and across the Atlantic from Indian refineries, which have been big buyers of Russian oil, according to shipping records, Refinitiv data and analysis by Helsinki-based think tank Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.</p> <p>In the wake of the invasion of Ukraine and sanctions from the U.S. and the European Union, traders are working to obscure the origins of Russian oil to keep it flowing. The oil is being concealed in blended refined products such as gasoline, diesel and chemicals.</p> <p>Oil is also being transferred between ships at sea, a page out of the playbook used to buy and sell sanctioned Iranian and Venezuelan oil. The transfers are happening in the Mediterranean, off the coast of West Africa and the Black Sea with oil then heading toward China, India and Western Europe, according to shipping companies.</p> <p>European Union leaders agreed Tuesday to impose a phased ban on most Russian oil, eventually cutting off the Kremlin from its biggest energy buyer. They also are expected to ban European insurers from covering ships carrying Russian oil. But workarounds to evade sanctions are already under way and threaten to lower the efficacy of these restrictions.</p> <p>The U.S. embargo from March prohibits imports of crude, petroleum products, liquefied-natural gas and coal from Russia, but fuels are often made from blends of different products such as diesel.</p> <p>The U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control typically defines origin using 25% or more as a rule of thumb, according to trade lawyers. It excludes goods that have been substantially transformed into another foreign-made product. Whether refining crude oil into products like gasoline or diesel counts for this exclusion hasn’t been made clear by OFAC, according to lawyers at three different firms.</p> <p>Overall, Russian oil exports rebounded in April, after dropping in March as the first Western sanctions took effect, the International Energy Agency said. Russia’s oil exports rose by 620,000 barrels to 8.1 million barrels a day, close to its prewar levels, with the biggest increase going to India.</p> <p>India has emerged as a key hub for Russian oil flows. The country’s imports have skyrocketed to 800,000 barrels a day since the war began, compared with 30,000 barrels a day previously, according to commodity markets data company Kpler.</p> <p>That is likely because of the deep discount—a popular grade of Russian crude known as Urals is priced at around \$35 below Brent. It previously traded largely in line with the benchmark.</p>

A refinery owned by Indian energy giant Reliance Industries Ltd. bought seven times more Russian crude in May, compared with prewar levels, making up a fifth of its total intake, according to Kpler.

Reliance chartered an oil tanker to carry a cargo of alkylate, a gasoline component, departing from the nearby Sikka port on April 21 without a planned destination. Three days later, it updated its records with a U.S. port and sailed over, discharging its cargo on May 22 in New York.

“What likely happened was Reliance took on a discounted cargo of Russian crude, refined it and then sold the product on the short-term market where it found a U.S. buyer,” said Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. The organization is tracking Russian fossil fuel exports and their role in funding the Ukraine war. “It does look like there’s a trade where Russian crude is refined in India and then some of it is sold to the U.S.”

Reliance didn’t respond to a request for comment. Its joint CFO Srikanth Venkatachari said the company has minimized feedstock cost by sourcing “arbitrage barrels,” in a May 6 briefing.

Indian refined oil-product exports, beefed up by cheap Russian supplies, have grown sharply since the beginning of the war. Daily shipments to Europe have risen by a third and by 43% to the U.S. on a quarterly basis.

“If Indian refineries on the west coast have been importing lots of Russian crude then yes, probably there will be some Russian crude that has gone into the making of these products,” said Koen Wessels, an oil-products analyst at consulting firm Energy Aspects.

This comes at a time when gasoline and diesel prices have hit records in the U.S. due to high crude prices, weighing on consumers at a time when inflation was recently at a four-decade high. Extra supply from abroad may be less scrutinized, analysts said.

Last week, the Zhen 1 ship carrying Russian crude met the Lauren II, a giant crude carrier that can hold about 2 million barrels of oil, off the coast of West Africa. It likely discharged its load, ship data showed. Lauren II is heading for Gibraltar and then expected to go to China, analysts said.

It isn’t illegal for European or Asian refiners to buy Iranian, Venezuelan and Russian oil, but these trades are crippled by related, extensive restrictions—such as self-sanctioning banks and shipping companies—and the political risk of dealing with these countries. So just like for Iranian oil, the best option for Russia and its customers is increasingly to conceal its shipments.

There has also been a jump in ships carrying Russian crude switching off their GPS equipment, known as going dark in industry parlance, according to Israeli ship-data firm Windward. That makes this activity even harder to track.

Chinese buyers are seeking to hide Russian oil to avoid the high costs of transporting it, traders said. Fewer shipping and insurance companies are willing to touch it, meaning those that still do this business charge prices that are three-to-five times higher than before the invasion.

Rather than pay this all the way to China, firms including Unipet, Chinese oil behemoth Sinopec Group’s trading arm, are transporting labeled Russian oil short distances to a large vessel at sea and then transferring it, traders said. Unipet didn’t respond to a request for comment.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Inflation to worsen: blame lack of diesel
SOURCE	https://time.com/6182262/diesel-shortage-inflation/
GIST	It cost Carl Smith \$999 to refill the 275-gallons fuel tank of his semi-trailer on Sunday for a run from Ohio to Wisconsin—and that’s just because his fuel credit card cuts off at \$1,000. In the nearly 40 years he’s

been driving, the price of diesel fuel has never been that high. “That’s the most it ever cost me to fill up, and I didn’t even get all the way filled,” he says.

He adds a fuel surcharge to his rates, which will help him withstand the current high price of diesel. But he knows all that means is he’s passing on those diesel costs to the average American, for whom the price of goods hauled by truckers like him to the local grocery store keep growing.

Though most consumers shake their heads at the cost of gasoline and complain about the cost of filling up their car tanks, what they really should be worried about is the price of diesel. The U.S. economy runs on diesel. It’s what powers the container ships that bring goods from Asia and the trucks that collect goods from the ports and bring them to warehouses and then to your home. The farmers who grow the food you eat put diesel in their tractors to plow the fields, and the workers that bring construction equipment to build your home put diesel in their trucks.

Diesel prices are the highest they’ve been in the U.S. since the government began tracking them, and will likely go even higher this summer as demand remains high and as forecasters predict this year will see an [above-average number of hurricanes](#), which can idle refineries for days. The price of diesel went above \$5.50 a gallon in the beginning of May, and has stayed there ever since, a 70% increase from just a year ago. Diesel supplies have tightened just about every week since January and could continue to do so as more people fly, drive, and shop during the summer months, consuming more petroleum products.

“Unfortunately, I think there’s potential for another round of increases,” says Tom Kloza, global head of energy analysis for OPIS. “We’ve already seen the highest prices in our lifetimes, and it could go even higher.”

This means higher prices for just about everything. Mattel said in April that it is contemplating price increases, on top of ones it already posted last year, as the cost of ocean freight and raw materials climbs from 2021. Carter’s, the maker of baby clothes, said recently that its freight costs would be 10% higher than last year, and that it has raised pricing to cover “higher-than-expected transportation costs.” The Vita Coco Company, which makes coconut water, said in May that the total costs of its goods increased 19%, mostly because of a “[sharp increase of our transportation cost](#),” the company said it was embarking on its first price increase in years.

Even Target and Walmart, which have the scale to lock in better rates with ocean carriers and trucking companies, said they were hurt by the high cost of diesel. Both reported hits to their profits for the most recent quarter because of higher-than-expected freight and transportation costs. Target said it anticipates \$1 billion in incremental freight costs this year, as costs in the first three months of the year came in hundreds of millions of dollars higher than planned for.

The high prices to move goods come at a time when many companies say they’re already having trouble finding truck drivers. They might deter owner-operators from driving as many loads, because some freight brokers push back against continuing to raise fuel surcharges. That could lead to an even [lower supply of truck drivers](#). “It’s just a matter of math—if you’re not getting paid as much to haul a load, there’s no reason to run that load,” says Rebecca Oyler, the president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Assn.

In addition to driving food costs even higher, a shortage of diesel could also suppress food production. Ben Simons, who farms dairy, soybeans, and corn near Utica, N.Y., says that the rising cost of diesel and fertilizer has meant that it now costs him \$1,000 an acre to grow corn, up from \$450 an acre in the past few years. At the same time, tires have doubled in price—an increase related to high demand for petroleum products—as have the chemicals to grow his crops.

Simons and his wife Robin have decided not to plant their marginal land this year—extra acres where they sometimes grow crops—because of the added expense. If more farmers follow, he says, “you’re going to be seeing that in your grocery bill. People are complaining now? Just sit back and wait.”

Diesel isn't the only petroleum-based product seeing surging demand at a time when global supplies are limited. Demand and prices are also up for gasoline and jet fuel, as well as things like tires that are made of petroleum. The dynamic then becomes cyclical: to meet increasing demand trucks have to run more miles, which means they are burning more fuel and using more tires, which then creates the need for even more petroleum.

There are also fewer refineries, which process crude oil into diesel and other products, in the U.S. than were just a few years ago. There are just 124 now operating, down from twice as many in 1980, and down from 139 in 2016, according to the [U.S. Energy Information Association](#). The northeast region is particularly spare, with just seven refineries today, down from 27 in 1982.

With fewer refineries, suppliers in the Northeast and other regions of the country are competing with Europe and South America for diesel supplies, says Patrick De Haan, the head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. Refineries in the U.S. send diesel to South America, in part because they don't have to meet renewable fuel standard requirements, he says, rather than to the Northeast. Now, the Northeast is also competing for diesel with Europe, which [lost some of its supply because of the war in Ukraine](#).

The story of why there are fewer refineries has become politicized, like just about everything else in the economy. One explanation is that a lack of antitrust regulation in the U.S. allowed refinery mergers and acquisitions that might have been good for their bottom line but not for diesel supplies in the U.S. "We have been following petroleum refining for years—the amount of consolidation is just staggering," says Diana L. Moss, the president of the American Antitrust Institute, a progressive nonprofit that advocates for more antitrust enforcement. The federal government was lax on stopping refinery mergers, she argues. And, she adds, when industries consolidate, companies can raise prices because customers have fewer options.

But Patrick De Haan, of GasBuddy, says that the closure of refineries has more to do with simple economics. The largest refinery on the East Coast, the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery, caught fire in 2019, one year after emerging from bankruptcy, and ultimately decided to close. Then, when COVID-19 hit and demand for oil plummeted, other refineries, including one owned by Royal Dutch Shell, in Convent, La., closed down. Others have closed over the years because when demand goes down, refineries are very expensive to run.

There's little likelihood that refineries in the U.S. will be able to make more diesel, especially if demand for jet fuel and gasoline rise over the summer. The refineries in the Northeast are already running at 95% capacity. For prices to go down, the economy will likely have to go through what economists call demand destruction. Demand destruction happens when the price of something gets so high that people stop buying it. That ultimately leads to less demand and more supply, and lower prices.

Some businesses who have added fuel surcharges because of the cost of diesel say that they think that demand destruction is going to happen very soon. There are already signs it's beginning. Poole Anderson Construction, a Pennsylvania firm that builds higher education and health care facilities, has had to raise costs of some big projects by as much as 30% because of the high cost of diesel and supply chain issues, says president Stephanie Schmidt. Now, some clients are electing to hold off on starting their projects, hoping that costs will ease soon. If enough businesses like them give up, they may get their wish.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Home prices up 20.6% in March
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/economy/articles/2022-05-31/florida-leads-the-way-as-home-prices-defy-gravity-rising-20-6-in-march
GIST	Home prices continued their upward spiral in March, rising 20.6% annually, according to the S&P CoreLogic Case Shiller price index released on Tuesday. The gain compares with a revised gain of 20% for February.

Tampa posted the highest one-year increase with a 34.8% gain, while Phoenix saw a 32.4% increase, followed by Miami at 32%. Seventeen of the 20 cities in the index reported higher price increases in the 12 months ending March 2022.

“Those of us who have been anticipating a deceleration in the growth rate of U.S. home prices will have to wait at least a month longer,” said Craig J. Lazzara, managing director at S&P DJI. “The strength of the composite indices suggests very broad strength in the housing market, which we continue to observe.”

“All 20 cities saw double-digit price increases for the 12 months ended in March, and price growth in 17 cities accelerated relative to February’s report,” Lazzara added. “March’s price increase ranked in the top quintile of historical experience for every city, and in the top decile for 19 of them.”

Although home prices rose, other indicators of the housing market have cooled recently as the combination of high prices and sharply higher mortgage rates have crimped demand. New home sales tumbled 16.6% in April, leaving the sales pace down nearly 27% from a year ago. Contracts for pending sales, meanwhile, slipped 3.9% last month.

Much of the decline in housing activity can be explained by the confluence of rising prices, limited inventory and now mortgage rates that have breached 5% for a 30-year fixed rate loan. The Federal Reserve has embarked on an aggressive tightening of monetary policy that is designed to blunt runaway inflation.

“The Federal Reserve is trying to tame inflation and slow demand, leading to a slight normalizing of the housing market,” says Mark Fleming, chief economist at title insurer First American. “But the lack of supply against robust demographic demand will keep price appreciation elevated, so don’t expect a decline in prices anytime soon.”

Fleming says most of the hottest markets in terms of price appreciation are in the South, led by Florida, South Carolina and Georgia while Arizona and Idaho are also among the leaders.

“Homes that are going pending are doing so at the quickest pace on record and the share of homes selling above their asking price is at a record for the spring season,” Zillow economic data analyst Dan Handy said in a statement.

“However, the market may be nearing an inflection point when it comes to price growth,” Handy added. “Mortgage costs are more than 50% higher than they were a year ago and prospective buyers will likely start to rethink what they can afford. Sellers may already be responding, with the rate of price cuts now on the rise, to meet buyers where they are. Price growth will likely begin to come back towards earth as many buyers are priced out and inventory rises.”

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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle Foundation shakes up philanthropy
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/a-lot-of-money-with-less-effort-seattle-foundation-shakes-up-philanthropy-to-invest-in-groups-led-by-people-of-color/
GIST	<p>For a nonprofit, the chase for money is never-ending.</p> <p>Sean Goode, executive director of a Burien-based group that works with youth at risk of suspension and incarceration, knows the drill. A staffer spends countless hours writing a grant application that may yield only a few thousand dollars.</p> <p>That work is wasted if the organization doesn’t get the grant. And if it does, the funding usually only lasts about a year, meaning groups soon must start looking for new grants to keep their programs going.</p> <p>This spring, however, Goode’s group, Choose 180, won a \$600,000, three-year-grant from the Seattle Foundation without putting in nearly as much work as usual.</p>

“I don’t know that we’ve been a part of a process that provided these types of resources in a way that required so little effort,” Goode said. “There was legit only four questions on the grant application.”

While the philanthropic world is known for its obsession with metrics, especially in the age of tech benefactors, the Seattle Foundation requires only a mid-year verbal check-in and a brief annual results recap.

The foundation is doling out 21 grants like the one given to [Choose 180](#), totaling \$12.6 million, from its newly created [Fund for Inclusive Recovery](#) that has a goal of raising \$50 million in five years. Other recipients include the Rainier Beach Action Coalition, Surge Reproductive Justice and Families of Color Seattle — all led by people of color, those “closest to the problems and the pain” of an inequitable society, in the words of Kris Hermanns, who oversees the fund.

The foundation has been working to shift more of its giving to such groups, Hermanns said, and also to remove burdensome application and reporting requirements that have often kept them from getting money.

“We aim to do philanthropy differently,” Hermanns wrote in a recent [blog post](#). She’s the foundation’s chief impact officer, arriving in 2019 after seven years heading the Seattle-based Pride Foundation.

A growing number of philanthropic groups are moving in the same direction as they face criticism for perpetuating the inequalities they seek to address.

“Historically, philanthropy has been top-heavy and insular, and decisions are disproportionately made by white males from background(s) of privilege,” Edgar Villanueva, author of the influential book “Decolonizing Wealth,” wrote in an email. “And HOW decisions are made has never been super transparent.”

Villanueva, who lives in New York City, salutes the Fund for Inclusive Recovery, though he isn’t familiar with its specifics. At the same time, he cautioned, there’s generally “a danger of these gestures being performative” and not going far enough.

Villanueva advocates a hard look at how philanthropists got their wealth — “and who may have been harmed in its accumulation” — and moving from “charity” to “redistribution,” meaning handing over assets and power to community groups.

Emphasizing racial equity

The nation’s 16th largest “community” foundation, as opposed to one started by an individual or family, the Seattle Foundation has increasingly emphasized racial equity over the past 30 years.

In 1991, the [National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy](#) wrote a searing report on the foundation, which it said funded safe, traditional organizations like the United Way and YMCA and had “no policy of making the issues of the disadvantaged a priority.” That may have stemmed, the report noted, “from the nearly exclusive white, middle- to upper-class makeup of the foundation’s board and staff.”

The foundation took note, Hermanns said. It started giving out small grants, \$7,500 or less, to new and grassroots groups. It gave an early grant, for instance, to what is now OneAmerica, the immigrant advocacy organization founded by Pramila Jayapal long before the Seattle Democrat was elected to Congress.

About half of the foundation’s staff and board are now Black, Indigenous and people of color. The board chair, University of Washington Vice Provost and Dean Ed Taylor, is Black, as is the new president and CEO, Alesha Washington.

Still, the foundation has limited say over the funding it distributes. Ninety percent, more than \$220 million in 2021, comes from funds controlled by donors, who use the foundation as a low-cost, efficient vehicle for their philanthropy.

The foundation has been encouraging donors to invest in organizations promoting racial equity, said its chief engagement officer, Stephanie McLemore Bray. They may or may not be on board, and there is not universal agreement on what advances, or blocks, racial justice.

Last year, amid a police defunding movement arising from the killing of George Floyd, a foundation advisory council discussed whether a new policy should prohibit funding to the [Seattle Police Foundation](#), which raises money to support the city's police department. Advisory council members disagreed, recommending [a policy](#) that broadly bars funding discriminatory and hate groups.

"We were extremely disappointed," said Justin Ward, research director of the group DivestSPD, who also criticizes the foundation for distributing funds to conservative groups including the Billy Graham Evangelical Association and the Discovery Institute, a Seattle-based think tank.

Seattle Foundation giving to the Seattle Police Foundation from so-called "donor advised funds" nevertheless dropped from \$217,522 in 2018 to \$4,000 in 2021.

The foundation has a free hand with the remaining 10% of its giving.

(The Seattle Times partners with the Seattle Foundation for some of its community-funded journalism, with the foundation facilitating contributions to some coverage initiatives.)

When COVID-19 hit and government relief funding was yet to come, the foundation raised \$10 million in three weeks to help laid off workers pay their rent and feed their families, Hermanns recalled. Given the speed the foundation deemed necessary, it relied on a network of sources to decide who got the money, which rankled some community groups.

"There was not even an opportunity to apply," said Aneelah Afzali, executive director of the [American Muslim Empowerment Network](#) at the Muslim Association of Puget Sound, which was providing housing and other assistance. She and others complained, and the foundation opened the process up in subsequent rounds.

Then, Hermanns said, the foundation turned to addressing the racial and economic inequities made ever-more visible by the pandemic. That gave rise to the Fund for Inclusive Recovery, with money contributed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Seattle Mariners, Raikes Foundation and others. The grants are geared toward advocacy work that influences policies affecting people of color.

"It's been great to see the Seattle Foundation step up and want to address this, particularly because we've seen a disparity in funding for so long," said Afzali, who now serves on a foundation [advisory committee](#). Trish Millines Dziko, executive director of [TAF](#), a Seattle-based nonprofit devoted to educational equity, said she joined the foundation board last fall because she believes it is among a handful of large foundations reexamining their giving practices.

"It really is a release of control in some way," she said. "It's about trust... that the organizations you are funding are capable of doing the job."

"And yes," Millines Dziko said, "you should expect outcomes and all that kind of stuff, but the outcomes should be set by the organization, not by the funder."

The inclusive recovery grants are following that model.

"We are basically setting our own benchmarks," said E.N. West, co-director of Surge Reproductive Justice, which advocates for safe and healthy births among Black, queer and transgender people.

	Those benchmarks include building community networks, leaders and a framework for policy, rather than exact measurements.
	"We don't have to try to fit ourselves into a very specific box," West said.
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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle leaders won't probe deleted texts?
SOURCE	https://www.axios.com/local/seattle/2022/05/31/seattle-leaders-wont-probe-deleted-texts-from-2020-protests
GIST	<p>None of Seattle's new city leaders is stepping up to launch — or even call for — an investigation into whether former Mayor Jenny Durkan, former police chief Carmen Best or anyone else broke the law when potentially key text messages exchanged during the 2020 racial justice protests were deleted from their city-issues phones.</p> <p>Driving the news: Mayor Bruce Harrell and interim police chief Adrian Diaz each told Axios this month they have no authority to order a criminal probe into Durkan, Best and other city officials.</p> <p>What they're saying: "It's not the mayor's job to be the prodder ... of multiple investigations," said Harrell, who called for an investigation into the texts last year while running for mayor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I don't have that ability to, you know, say, 'Okay, we need to order (an investigation),' " Diaz said. "It's not in my purview." <p>Details: Each also said it was up to City Attorney Ann Davison or Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson to make the call.</p> <p>Yes, but: Ferguson's office told Axios it can't investigate without a referral from the governor or county prosecutor.</p> <p>The latest: Davison's office told Axios last week, in its first detailed statement about the matter, that it "has seen no basis to request or conduct a criminal investigation of the missing text messages from current or former city officials."</p> <p>Why it matters: Anyone who willfully destroys or conceals a public record is guilty of a felony in Washington.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> But more than a year after the public first learned about the missing text messages from a city ethics investigation, no one has been held accountable for deleting them. The comments from Harrell, Diaz and Davison this month are the most definitive to date indicating that likely no one ever will be. The text messages are both public records that are required to be kept under state law and potential evidence in multiple pending lawsuits against the city over its handling of the 2020 protests. <p>Catch up quick: The missing texts overlap with a controversial period in June 2020, when police used violence to quell demonstrators and abandoned the East Precinct, and the city allowed protesters to take over six-square blocks of Capitol Hill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durkan and Best's messages could be crucial in understanding how government officials responded to one of the most tumultuous periods in Seattle's history. Already, the missing texts have proved costly to taxpayers: The city attorney's office spent more than \$400,000 on a forensic analysis to try to recover them and \$200,000 to The Seattle Times to settle a public records suit about them. <p>What they're saying: "After significant scrutiny, no evidence has appeared to suggest intentional wrongdoing or deliberate destruction of records," Davison's office said in its statement to Axios.</p>

	<p>Reality check: That statement appears to contradict findings of the forensic analysis, commissioned last year by Davison's predecessor, Pete Holmes, in response to the lawsuits over the protests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That analysis, released after Davison took office in February, revealed that Best testified in a November 2021 deposition that she "periodically deleted" her texts and found data to support that. • It also found Durkan's texts likely vanished after someone manually set her phone to automatically delete messages older than 30 days. • Though many of Durkan's deleted texts were recovered from other people's devices, about 2,024 could not be found, per the analysis. <p>The other side: Durkan said she accidentally dropped her phone into salt water and denied setting her replacement phone to automatically delete messages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best has publicly said she doesn't know why her texts disappeared. <p>Between the lines: Davison's office didn't respond to follow-up questions asking to specify what "scrutiny" it undertook and whether it should ask for an outside review due to its own conflicts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Davison is serving as both the decider of whether to investigate the missing texts and the defender of lawsuits related to them. <p>Flashback: While running for mayor, Harrell not only said the missing texts should be investigated, but that Durkan should consider resigning over them.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Stock futures swing in choppy trading
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/global-stocks-markets-dow-update-06-01-2022-11654069174?mod=hp_lead_pos2
GIST	<p>U.S. stock futures swung in a choppy trading session, pointing to more volatility ahead for major indexes as June trading kicks off.</p> <p>Futures for the S&P 500 edged up 0.1% Wednesday after wavering between small gains and losses. Contracts for the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.4%, while those for the technology-focused Nasdaq-100 fell 0.1%, erasing gains from earlier in the day. On Tuesday, major U.S. indexes fell, leading the S&P 500 to end May roughly flat after a tumultuous month marked by major moves in both directions.</p> <p>Wednesday's session ushers in a new trading month, but few investors expect a reprieve from the volatility that has dominated the markets this year. Many traders remain worried about the pace of the Federal Reserve's interest-rate increases and whether they will plunge the U.S. economy into a recession. Eight of the last 11 extended Fed rate-rise cycles have eventually ended in recession, according to Deutsche Bank analysts.</p> <p>Still, many traders say a recession isn't guaranteed, and any significant economic slowdown could be many months away. That has led some investors to wade into the market and scoop up shares with beaten-down valuations, injecting more volatility into markets.</p> <p>More lightly staffed trading desks during the summer months could spur more volatility in the weeks ahead. Summer trading tends to have lower trading volumes and less liquidity, leading to more dramatic moves in stocks. Many investors are also bracing for more volatility ahead in other asset classes, which have also notched dramatic swings this year.</p> <p>In the bond market Wednesday, the yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury note advanced to 2.869%, from 2.842% Tuesday, as investors dumped government bonds. Yields and bond prices move inversely. Yields on the benchmark note still remain well below this year's closing high of 3.124%, but have advanced this week as traders have continued to reassess the path of interest rates.</p>

Crude prices rose, as investors digested European Union leaders' plan to [impose an oil embargo on Russia](#) and [a ban on insuring ships](#) that carry Russian oil. Brent crude, the international benchmark for oil prices, rose 1.5% to \$117.37 a barrel. West Texas Intermediate, the U.S. marker, advanced 1.7% to \$116.63.

In premarket trading in New York, [Salesforce](#) jumped 7.7% after reporting revenue that [outpaced analyst expectations](#), easing concerns about demand for its business software. Shares of energy companies also climbed, tracing oil prices higher. [Marathon Oil](#) and [Occidental Petroleum](#) each advanced more than 1% ahead of the opening bell.

Fresh data on activity at U.S. factories are due later Wednesday, as are results from [Hewlett Packard Enterprise](#) and the meme stock [GameStop](#).

Overseas, the pan-continental Stoxx Europe 600 fell 0.2%, erasing earlier gains. Shares of [Dr. Martens](#) jumped 27% after the shoemaker reported a significant rise in pretax profit for fiscal 2022 and indicated it was navigating the current inflationary environment with price increases.

In Germany, shares of DWS Group, Deutsche Bank's asset-management arm, fell 6.7%. The Frankfurt offices of Deutsche Bank and DWS Group [were raided by authorities Tuesday](#) over allegations of greenwashing in its mutual funds. DWS on Wednesday said its chief executive was [stepping down](#).

In Asia, trading was mixed. China's Shanghai Composite lost 0.1%, [as Covid-19 lockdowns eased in China's financial capital](#). Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.6%. Japan's Nikkei 225, in contrast, rose about 0.7%.

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HEADLINE	06/01 Ukraine rejects land for peace
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-zelensky-rejects-trading-land-for-peace-with-russia-11654072526?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his country won't surrender any territory to Russia in exchange for peace despite losing terrain and soldiers daily to Moscow's forces.</p> <p>"We're not ready to concede any of our territories, because our territories are our territories," Mr. Zelensky said in an interview with Newsmax that aired late Tuesday, doubling down on earlier refusals. Trading land for peace "is not something we can agree on."</p> <p>Some European officials and others including former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger have suggested that Kyiv might achieve a cease-fire and reduce the war's economic impact by letting Russia maintain control over territory it has occupied with military might.</p> <p>Mr. Zelenksy said Ukrainians continue to pay a heavy toll defending the country's eastern Donbas area.</p> <p>"The situation in the east is very difficult," Mr. Zelensky said in the interview. "We are losing 60 to 100 soldiers every day and something like 500 wounded in combat."</p> <p>The fighting remained concentrated around Severodonetsk, capital of the Luhansk region, which along with Donetsk makes up Donbas, where Russia is focusing its offensive after failing to take cities in central Ukraine.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the governor of Luhansk, Serhiy Haidai, wrote on Telegram that Russia and its local proxies were "consolidating in the center of Severodonetsk" and had attacked a nitrogen plant, releasing toxic gases into the air. He said the Russians were also firing artillery at a plant in Lysychansk, a Ukrainian stronghold across the river from Severodonetsk.</p>

In addition to losing men, Ukraine has also been gradually losing control of Severodonetsk over the past week, and has pleaded with the West that its forces needed more advanced weapons if they were to hold on to Donbas.

On Tuesday, President Biden pledged to provide Ukraine with a [guided-rocket system](#) capable of striking targets from as far as 48 miles.

The goal in sending the rocket system is to boost Ukraine's firepower against Russian forces in the Donbas region, without enabling Kyiv to expand the war into Russian territory. The rocket systems "will enable them to more precisely strike key targets on the battlefield in Ukraine," Mr. Biden wrote in an opinion column in the [New York Times](#) on Tuesday, adding that the U.S. won't try to oust Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#).

"So long as the United States or our allies are not attacked, we will not be directly engaged in this conflict, either by sending American troops to fight in Ukraine or by attacking Russian forces," Mr. Biden wrote.

The White House hasn't said how many rocket systems will be provided. U.S. officials say that the immediate plan is to send 48 rockets and four wheeled High Mobility Artillery Rocket System launchers to Ukraine.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said the supply of weapons to Kyiv by Washington increases the risk of direct confrontation between Russia and the U.S., the latest rebuke of Western arms deliveries to Ukraine by a Russian official.

Any arms transfers to Ukraine "increase risks of such a development," Mr. Ryabkov said Wednesday in comments carried by Russian state news agency RIA Novosti.

Last month, Russia's ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Antonov, said [the war in Ukraine](#) was increasingly drawing Washington into conflict with Moscow, calling the situation extremely dangerous.

The U.S. and its allies have been shipping large volumes of heavy [weaponry to Ukraine](#), including more advanced Western systems to supplement the light weapons and Soviet-era arms that were funneled into Ukraine since before the invasion started.

Analysts say that while Ukrainians have learned to use new weapons systems individually, they will be much more effective when they are able to use them in concert. Western governments have hoped that the steady flow of weapons to the Kyiv government could change the calculus of the battle in eastern Ukraine, where [Russia wants to capture Donbas](#), once Ukraine's industrial heartland, which borders Russia.

"The situation in the Donbas direction is very difficult," Mr. Zelensky said in an address late Tuesday. "Given the presence of large-scale chemical production in Severodonetsk, the Russian army's strikes there, including blind air bombing, are just madness."

The Russian-backed leader of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, Leonid Pasechnik, told the Russian state-run TASS news agency early on Tuesday that a third of Severodonetsk is controlled by separatist forces. Video from Chechen fighters allied with Russia in the city showed soldiers moving unimpeded in the city center.

The fall of Severodonetsk would put the Russians closer to their goal of controlling Donbas and give them a firmer grip on roads leading to Slovyansk and Kramatorsk, seen as the Ukrainian army's most important redoubts in the area. Russia's assault on Severodonetsk has come at a high price for its armed forces suffering from a lack of manpower following its failed attempt to take Kyiv.

Should Ukraine cede Severodonetsk to the Russians, Kyiv's troops would likely fall back to Lysychansk, which overlooks Severodonetsk from across the Siverskyi Donetsk river.

HEADLINE	05/31 Dreaded commute keeps offices empty
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/dreaded-commute-to-the-city-is-keeping-offices-mostly-empty-11653989581?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3
GIST	<p>It isn't the office that workers heading into the city despise. It's the commute.</p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic led to a surge in remote work, emptying out office towers as more people worked from home. Cities with longer commutes have taken the biggest economic hit, while urban areas where people live closer to work have a higher return-to-office rate, according to The Wall Street Journal's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data and building-access company Kastle Systems.</p> <p>Recent polling of office workers supports the analysis. In a Gallup survey last summer, for example, 52% of those who want to work remotely listed avoiding commuting time as a top reason they don't want to go to the office. Other common reasons, like well-being and flexibility, are also closely tied to the commute.</p> <p>"I think it is the biggest factor," said Richard Florida, a professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and School of Cities. "Economists and psychologists have long said that a long commute is the most immiserating condition of daily life. So it makes sense that this is what people want to avoid."</p> <p>Employee opposition to commuting means that landlords and cities aiming to refill their office floors may need to do more than renovate old buildings or put more police on street corners. It may require investing in housing, highways, public transportation and other infrastructure necessary to reduce commute times. Luring commuters back is critical to central business districts that depend on these workers to support bars, restaurants and other small businesses that fuel these economies.</p> <p>Eight of the 10 major cities with the biggest drop in office occupancy during the pandemic had an average one-way commute of more than 30 minutes in 2019. Meanwhile, six of the 10 cities with the smallest drop in office occupancy have average commutes of less than 30 minutes. The Journal's analysis covers 24 of the country's largest metropolitan areas.</p> <p>The New York metropolitan area had the longest average commute time before the pandemic at 37.7 minutes, according to the Census Bureau. It also has one of the country's lowest office-occupancy rates. Keycard swipes were down by 62% since early 2020 as of May 18, according to Kastle, compared with an average decline of 57% for the country's biggest cities. Businesses catering to commuters have closed and retail vacancies in Midtown Manhattan have soared.</p> <p>Minneapolis and Austin, where average commutes were well below 30 minutes in 2019, experienced a drop in occupancy of less than 40%.</p> <p>Crime and unease over the use of public transit also factor into how workers feel about returning to the office. The type of industry that dominates a city can also play a big role. San Jose, Calif., for example, had a short average commute in 2019 but still saw a massive drop in office occupancy during the pandemic, in part because tech companies have been more willing to let employees work from home.</p> <p>Commuting has been unpopular for ages, and economists say it hurts productivity. The average travel time to work in the U.S. increased from 25 to 27.6 minutes between 2006 and 2019, according to the Census Bureau. Delays caused by traffic jams also increased as investment in new roads and public transit failed to keep up with population growth and growing demand for transportation, said David Schrank, a senior research scientist at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.</p> <p>Millions of Americans discovered during the pandemic that they could work just as productively remotely. By 2020, the burdensome commute "was tradition more than necessity" for many workers, said Mark Dixon, chief executive of flexible-office manager IWG PLC.</p>

Eli Boufis, head of private equity for Chicago-based Golden Vision Capital Americas, said that when he recently interviewed job candidates, those who live in the suburbs said they no longer wanted to commute daily.

“The first thing they ask about is how often do I have to be in the office,” he said.

Some ex-commuters say they can’t imagine ever going back. For 15 years, Mark Schnurman would leave his New Jersey home at 5:25 a.m. each weekday to catch the train to Manhattan, where he worked as a real-estate executive. The trip typically took one hour and 20 minutes, though on a bad day it took 2½ hours.

“It took me away from being present in the life of my children as they were growing up,” he said.

Now Mr. Schnurman runs a franchise consulting business from his home and no longer travels to the city. He is spending much of the year at his country house in Pennsylvania. It isn’t the office itself that he dislikes. He said he misses the water-cooler chats and the camaraderie.

“If I had a 10-minute commute, it would be fine,” he said. “But it’s not worth it for me.”

The anti-commute phenomenon is global, said IWG’s Mr. Dixon, whose company manages around 3,500 office locations in over 120 countries. Offices in smaller cities and in the suburbs are fuller than in commuter cities like Los Angeles and London, he said. Big cities with good infrastructure and plenty of affordable housing, like Copenhagen, are also seeing high occupancy because people are able to live closer to work, he added.

In the U.S., lack of funding and surging costs make it harder to invest in roads, rail and buses. A \$1 trillion federal infrastructure funding plan signed into law in November helps, but that is likely just a start. Meanwhile red tape, rising labor and materials costs and high land prices hobble housing developers at a time when rents are surging.

Mr. Florida at the University of Toronto expects cities to evolve away from pure business districts and toward more mixed-use neighborhoods. As fewer people commute to city centers, more offices and meeting rooms will open in residential neighborhoods and in suburbs, he said. Some companies such as Hudson’s Bay Co. and Daybase are already trying to meet that demand by turning suburban retail spaces into offices.

Empty offices in city centers may be replaced by apartment buildings. “The end result is more balanced communities,” Mr. Florida said. “But—and it is a big but—the adjustment will be painful.”

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HEADLINE	05/31 Covid infectious: after 5 or even 10 days
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-can-leave-you-infectious-after-five-or-even-10-days-11653994800?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos4
GIST	<p>Seeing that bright red line appear on an at-home Covid-19 test can feel inevitable during a surge like the one under way now. What can be surprising is how many days later that line keeps popping up.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends five days from first symptoms or diagnosis as a minimum isolation period before infected people can return to public activities while maintaining certain precautions. Yet some people continue to test positive for the Covid-19 virus on rapid tests beyond those five days. Some even test positive after 10 days and after symptoms have resolved.</p> <p>The question then becomes: How long are people infectious? Into the pandemic’s third year, as new, more infectious variants continue to circulate widely and more people have built-up immune defenses,</p>

researchers aren't totally sure when or how long individuals with Covid-19 might be contagious and shedding virus, particularly at the end of an infection.

"It's still up for debate," said Nathaniel Hafer, director of operations for the University of Massachusetts Center for Clinical and Translational Science.

The isolation guidance that [the CDC updated](#) amid [Omicron's rapid spread](#) is likely leading some people to leave isolation while they are contagious, some health experts and clinicians said, particularly if people don't wait for a negative rapid test and aren't wearing [high-quality masks](#) for a full 10 days.

"We know that people will be returning to work while they're still infectious, even if they feel better," said Carina Marquez, an associate professor and infectious-disease doctor at the University of California, San Francisco.

Dr. Marquez said she tested positive on an at-home test for 13 days recently, a period when she decided to work remotely. For those without that option, Dr. Marquez said that they should stop isolating after getting a negative rapid test, or they should stop isolating after 10 days and [wear a mask](#), whichever comes first.

Most people with Covid-19 will still test positive on a rapid test at five days, and a "fairly large percentage" test positive after 10 days, CDC spokeswoman Jasmine Reed said. Infectiousness drops significantly at eight days, with few people remaining contagious at 10 days, she said.

The CDC guidance also takes symptoms into account as a factor to gauge contagiousness, she said, noting that people should only leave isolation after five days if their symptoms are improving. The CDC recommends that everyone wear a well-fitted mask and avoid travel and being around high-risk people for 10 days, no matter when the person leaves isolation.

No test can perfectly tell whether someone with Covid-19 is contagious, infectious-disease experts and laboratorians said. A more accurate indicator is culturable virus, a test of whether a virus sample taken from a patient can infect cells in a lab. But such tests are complex and can only be run in labs with certain safety protocols.

Several studies suggest that positive results on rapid antigen tests such as the iHealth, QuickVue and BinaxNow [often match with](#) culturable virus results. Some public-health experts have encouraged people to use [at-home tests](#) as a gauge for infectiousness, especially since they have become more widely available.

The tests often only turn positive when a person is carrying large amounts of virus. At the beginning of an infection, when a person's viral load is rising, it might take a few days before tests turn positive. That is why health authorities recommend that people with symptoms and negative rapid-test results wait and retest or get a more sensitive [lab-based PCR test](#).

As a person's viral load drops, rapid tests are a better indicator of who is no longer infectious, public-health experts said. The University of Chicago started deploying the tests in December to figure out which healthcare workers could safely come back to work and help alleviate [staffing shortages](#) before 10 days of isolation, said Emily Landon, UChicago Medicine's executive medical director of infection prevention and control.

More than 40% of 260 healthcare workers who felt well enough to work were positive the first time they took a rapid test between days five and 10 of an infection, Dr. Landon and her colleagues found, according to [a preprint study](#) that isn't peer-reviewed.

"We didn't feel comfortable having them come back," Dr. Landon said.

Other recent studies have also demonstrated that a significant portion of people test positive on rapid tests after five days, including [one published by the CDC](#) in February that found 54% of people had positive rapid-test results between days five and nine after symptoms or diagnosis. The percentage of positive results declined over time.

The authors wrote that rapid tests might be a useful tool to help guide whether someone is infectious, even if it isn't a guarantee. The findings support the CDC's recommendations that people take precautions until day 10 even if they leave isolation earlier, Ms. Reed said.

One [recent study found](#) that only 17% of vaccinated college students had culturable virus beyond day five, while [a separate study](#) of people with mild Covid-19 cases found more than 50% had culturable virus at day five and 25% did at day eight. Neither study has been peer-reviewed.

"It does make us concerned that people are still able to transmit at day five or day eight," said Amy Barczak, an infectious-disease doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and senior author of one of the studies.

Both studies found that a negative rapid test after an initial diagnosis is a good indicator that a person no longer has culturable virus and a solid sign they are likely no longer contagious. With a positive rapid-test result toward the tail end of the 10 days, however, it can be more difficult to tell how infectious that person might be, especially if they are feeling better and the line is growing fainter.

Dr. Barczak said that there appears to be a subset of people who can continue to test positive on rapid tests and who have negative viral culture. But for people testing at home, the only information they have is a positive result.

"You should consider yourself potentially having transmissible virus," said Tara Bouton, an assistant professor of medicine at Boston University School of Medicine and lead author on another one of the studies.

Immunocompromised people and those who get severely ill can be contagious even longer than 10 days, studies suggest, and patients who experience [rebounding symptoms](#) or who test positive again after taking [Pfizer](#) Inc.'s Paxlovid pill should also assume that they are contagious, infectious-disease experts said.

Generally, studies suggest it is rare for virus to be culturable after 10 days. Infectious-disease experts disagree about whether most people should continue to test beyond that point.

"These tests aren't perfect," UChicago's Dr. Landon said. "They underestimate contagiousness in the beginning of illness and overestimate at the end...but not by that much."

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HEADLINE	05/31 Experts warn continued monkeypox spread
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/05/monkeypox-unlikely-to-become-a-pandemic-but-spread-may-not-be-contained/
GIST	<p>The multinational monkeypox outbreak continues to pose a low risk to the general public, and, for now, it seems unlikely that cases will mushroom into a global pandemic, according to the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>But, experts are concerned that the virus could continue to spread and that transmission may escape containment without an urgent and thorough public health response.</p> <p>The outbreak tally continues to increase rapidly, with hundreds of cases now reported across at least 23 countries. In an update released Sunday, May 29, WHO reported 257 confirmed cases and around 120 suspected cases from 23 countries. Those figures are already significantly outdated. As of Monday, Our</p>

World in Data reported [555 confirmed cases](#) worldwide. On Tuesday, [the United Kingdom reported 190 cases](#), up from the 106 that WHO reported Sunday. Likewise, the US total has increased to [15 cases](#), up from 10 reported last week.

In a press briefing last Thursday, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said the agency [presumes that there is some community spread of the virus in the US](#).

Still, in [a public presentation](#) guiding clinicians last week, Agam Rao, a CDC infectious disease specialist and poxvirus expert, highlighted that the monkeypox virus is not easily spread. The virus is related to smallpox but causes a relatively mild disease with a telltale rash and is usually accompanied by flu-like symptoms. Transmission requires close and prolonged contact, with the highest risk of spread to health care workers and the family members and sexual partners of infected people. "Monkeypox virus does not have the potential to be a pandemic," Rao said succinctly. (More information on monkeypox and its transmission is [here](#).)

So far, many of the cases appear to be in men who have sex with men (MSM), and the virus appears to be spreading through sexual networks. But health officials are cautious to avoid spurring stigma or a false sense of security. The virus can spread to anyone, and it is not a sexually transmitted infection specifically.

Moderate risk and continued spread

In its risk assessment Sunday, WHO said the "risk for the general public appears to be low," and the "overall public health risk at global level is assessed as moderate," given widespread cases clustering in countries outside West and Central Africa, where the virus is endemic in animals.

"The public health risk could become high if this virus exploits the opportunity to establish itself as a human pathogen and spreads to groups at higher risk of severe disease such as young children and immunosuppressed persons," WHO said.

In a public webinar Monday, WHO's technical lead for monkeypox, Rosamund Lewis, elaborated on that assessment, saying: "[At the moment](#), we are not concerned of a global pandemic... We are concerned that individuals may acquire this infection through high-risk exposure if they don't have the information they need to protect themselves," she added. "And we are concerned that because the global population is not immune to orthopoxviruses since the end of smallpox eradication that the virus may attempt to exploit a niche and spread more easily between people."

Health officials are now racing to raise awareness and step up outreach programs ahead of Pride Month celebrations in June. Already spread of the virus has been linked to large events and parties in Europe as pandemic restrictions eased, Hans Henri Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, [noted in a statement](#) Tuesday. The virus is suspected to have circulated unrecognized for weeks or longer. Upcoming festivals and large parties could provide further opportunities for the outbreak to amplify.

"We do not yet know if we will be able to contain its spread completely," Kluge said. "For that, we need a significant and urgent reduction in exposures through clear communication, community-led action, case isolation during the infectious period, and effective contact tracing and monitoring."

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HEADLINE	05/31 IAEA: Iran has material 1 nuclear bomb
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220531-iran-now-has-enough-fissile-material-for-one-nuclear-bomb-iaea
GIST	Iran has enriched enough uranium for making one Hiroshima-size nuclear bomb, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in its quarterly report. The IAEA says that Iran now has around 43 kilograms (95 pounds) of uranium enriched to 60 percent (in March, Iran had 33 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60 percent). The 43 kg of 60 percent enriched uranium would yield about 22-25 kg of uranium enriched to 90 percent, which is weapon-grade.

Iran has enriched enough uranium for making one Hiroshima-size nuclear bomb, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in its quarterly report. The report was viewed by several media outlets Monday, among them the Wall Street Journal, Reuters, and Agence France-Presse.

The IAEA says that Iran now has around 43 kilograms (95 pounds) of uranium enriched to 60 percent (in March, Iran had 33 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60 percent).

The 43 kg of 60 percent enriched uranium would yield about 22-25 kg of uranium enriched to 90 percent, which is weapon-grade.

France24 reports that a separate IAEA report, also seen by the news outlet, said Iranian officials have not given “technically credible” answers to questions regarding old nuclear material which was discovered at several military and scientific sites in Iran.

Iran’s nuclear program was launched under the shah, but in 1992, now under the ayatollahs regime, the program was bolstered for the purpose of building nuclear weapons. Israel and the United States, relying on cyberattacks and covert action, attacked the Iranian nuclear weapons program and the scientists involved in it, but these attacks only caused delays on the margins of the program.

In 2015, Iran struck a deal with the United States, China, Russia and other world powers. The deal rolled back Iran’s progress toward the bomb; imposed strict limits on various aspects of the country’s nuclear development; and imposed an intrusive inspection regime to verify Iran’s compliance with the deal.

In exchange, Iran received some of the money frozen in Western banks since the ayatollahs came to power in 19.

In May 2018, the Trump administration withdrew the United States from the deal, and imposed what it called a “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign on Iran.

Iran used the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 deal, and the consequent weakening of the inspection regime, to ramp up its nuclear weapons-related activities: building thousands of advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges and moving them to fortified sites under ground; reopening the nuclear reactor in Arak, which will allow it to build nuclear weapons from plutonium; and continuing to improve its ballistic missiles.

The Biden administration has been trying to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, but the indirect talks between the United States and Iran have stalled.

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HEADLINE	05/31 China agriculture problems pose risk to US
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220531-china-s-growing-agricultural-problems-pose-risks-for-the-u-s
GIST	<p>China is facing a growing demand on its agricultural production. The Chinese government has taken several policy, technology, and economic initiatives to address the growing problem, but these measures are not enough to solve China’s problems. China has also gone abroad to address its needs through investments and acquisitions of farmland, animal husbandry, agricultural equipment, and intellectual property (IP), particularly of GM seeds. These efforts present several risks to U.S. economic and national security.</p> <p>The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission has just issued a new report which addresses the growing challenge China’s agricultural problems pose for the United States.</p> <p>Here are two sections from the report:</p>

Introduction

China faces growing demands on its agricultural production that it seeks to address through policy, technology, and economic activities. In 2021, China imported a record amount of corn at 28.35 million metric tons (mmt), 152 percent more than in 2020 and more than 10 percent of China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) estimate for the country's total corn consumption (see Tables 1 and 2).¹ The China Academy of Social Sciences' 2020 Rural Development Institute report claimed "there is likely to be a grain shortfall of about 130 mmt, including about 25 mmt of staple food grain" by the end of 2025.*²

Diminishing arable land, shifting demographics, and natural disasters compound these trends and present food security challenges to China's leaders. In response, China has introduced domestic policies to promote food security and lessen food waste, both of which have been a priority of General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping since he assumed power. Under his rule, the government has also established policies to expand domestic farmland and harness innovations in agricultural technologies, such as genetically modified (GM) seed lines, all in an effort to bolster food security.

The Chinese government's domestic efforts, however, are not enough to solve China's problems. Recognizing its challenges, China has also gone abroad to address its needs through investments and acquisitions of farmland, animal husbandry, agricultural equipment, and intellectual property (IP), particularly of GM seeds. The United States is a global leader in all of these fields, making it a prime trading partner and often a target of China's efforts to strengthen its agriculture sector and food security, sometimes through illicit means.

These efforts present several risks to U.S. economic and national security. For example, Chinese companies' acquisition of hog herds in the United States may save China money and enhance its domestic capacity; however, this could also reduce China's need for U.S.-sourced production and redistributes the environmental effects of hog waste to U.S. communities. If further consolidations and Chinese investments in U.S. agricultural assets take place, China may have undue leverage over U.S. supply chains. China's access to U.S. agricultural IP may also erode U.S. competitiveness in agriculture technology that supports food production. Additionally, China's illicit acquisitions of GM seeds provides a jumpstart to China's own development of such seeds, deprives U.S. companies of revenue, and offers an opportunity to discover vulnerabilities in U.S. crops.

This report reviews China's food security challenges and how these vulnerabilities drive interests in U.S.-China agricultural relations. Specifically, it evaluates the motivations behind China's agricultural investments, including challenges to food production and relevant CCP efforts to reduce import reliance, conserve farmland, and modernize agricultural technologies. It then examines the main areas of Chinese investment in the United States, including land, livestock, grains, and relevant infrastructure, like agricultural equipment and technology. Finally, the report presents considerations for lawmakers regarding further Chinese integration in the U.S. agriculture sector.

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Considerations for Congress

China has built an extensive toolkit for addressing its domestic concerns regarding food security as well as its larger goals of achieving global leadership in agricultural innovation and production. Below are areas of consideration that may present opportunities or concerns for Congress:

- *Information on Chinese ownership of U.S. agricultural land lacks transparency and remains limited.* USDA reporting requirements for foreign ownership of U.S. land lack rules and transparency related to ownership, use, and change in use. The lack of enforcement mechanisms in place regarding false reporting or no reporting at all also raises concerns. It is unclear to what extent USDA conducts field assessments or tracks changes in land use or ownership after the initial paperwork is filed. Chinese firms may easily circumvent current reporting requirements under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act and could repurpose the purchased land with little concern of repercussions from USDA due to the lack of enforcement measures in place. Without the proper collection of land data, it will be increasingly difficult for the U.S. government to monitor and consider any potential risks to national security.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <i>Chinese theft of U.S. agricultural IP threatens U.S. competitive advantage in crop development and agriculture technology innovation.</i> The United States government, private sector businesses, and academia invest enormous amounts of time and resources into researching and developing the science that goes into these innovations. Continued theft of valuable U.S. IP will continue to disadvantage homegrown innovation necessary for the United States to stay competitive in the agriculture sector. · <i>The potential weaponization of GMOs, like GM seeds, also poses a threat to U.S. economic and food security, which could be at risk if GM seed code is used to create a bioweapon.</i> There are currently few open source documents on cooperation between the intelligence community and USDA. As the agriculture sector continues to experience consolidations, CFIUS reviews of key agricultural mergers and acquisitions are likely to continue. USDA may provide critical information regarding trends in China's agriculture sector that could prove useful for CFIUS reviews. The extent of USDA and other related agency involvement in CFIUS actions may need clarification. Additionally, USDA may benefit from classified briefings as relevant government agencies see fit. · <i>The CCP may have undue leverage over U.S. supply chains if further consolidations and Chinese purchases of U.S. agribusinesses take place.</i> As seen with the Smithfield case, large agribusinesses have the resources to streamline their production lines by purchasing links or companies along the chain. This may create economic distortions in the U.S. agriculture market should China have more leverage over U.S. suppliers, resulting in more closed market or intracompany trade transactions. · <i>Foreign-owned land near military installations may require additional monitoring.</i> As more Chinese investors purchase land, including for agricultural use, CFIUS has an opportunity to safeguard vital military assets. Current U.S. law says that a purchase, lease, or concession by or to a foreign person of real estate located in proximity to sensitive government facilities will be subject to review by CFIUS. The committee has a right to refuse the transaction being considered, but it rarely conducts oversight post hoc. In some cases, threat environments may evolve and create new risks to U.S. defense infrastructures. Periodic reviews, as would be required with a security clearance, for example, could help alleviate national security concerns.
Return to Top	<p>1. Reuters, "China's Corn Imports Soar to New Record in 2021" January 18, 2022. https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/chinas-grainpork-sugar-imports-dece...</p> <p>2. Orange Wang, "China Food Security: Country Faces 'Grain Supply Gap of 130 Million Tonnes by 2025 as Rural Workforce Dwindles,'" South China Morning Post, August 18, 2020. https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3097781/chinafood-sec...</p>

HEADLINE	06/01 Ukraine girds for a wave of amputees
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/01/world/europe/ukraine-war-prosthetics.html
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — Vladyslav Tkachenko grimaced, gripping a wooden balance rail and edging forward carefully. Then he lost his balance, and his metal leg, fitted with his old combat boot, hit the ground. Undeterred, he got back up and pushed forward, staring determinedly at his reflection in the mirror.</p> <p>"In his mind, he is already back there, with his comrades," said Viktoriia Olikh, a prosthetics specialist, hovering behind him. She is helping fit Mr. Tkachenko, 25, with a limb he hopes will carry him back to the battlefield.</p> <p>Mr. Tkachenko lost his left leg on the second day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, when an artillery shell blew it off and tore into his right thigh, leaving a web of dark red scars. He is among the first in what Ukrainian doctors fear could become a devastating surge of amputations as Ukrainian forces push to regain territory and the fighting in the east intensifies.</p> <p>That expectation has sparked an international effort to shore up Ukraine's supply of prosthetic limbs. But Nagender Parashar, owner of a Kyiv-based prosthetics company, is worried. "There are already hundreds. The numbers are frightening," he said, referring to the number of Ukrainian soldiers who have lost limbs.</p> <p>"We are about to lose a lot more lives and limbs."</p> <p>Mr. Parashar, who came to Ukraine from India in the 1990s, studied computer science before starting a prosthetics import business. Dissatisfied by the quality of imports from China and eager to hone his craft, he began to disassemble and reassemble state-of-the-art German and Japanese artificial limbs. These days,</p>

he not only provides sockets for limbs made abroad, he also makes his own components in a factory in Kyiv, including hydraulic knees.

Ukrainians have gained expertise in the science and art of prosthetics out of necessity. After Russia seized the Crimean peninsula in 2014, and war injuries multiplied, the conflict spurred many to seek training at top institutions around the world.

But producing prosthetic limbs, an intricate and high-tech endeavor, is expensive. The Ukrainian government, which funds health care in the country, has struggled to keep up with the costs. As a result, some prosthetics manufacturers have gone bankrupt. Others like Mr. Parashar's company are still waiting for payments.

Nevertheless, Mr. Parashar said he is expanding production at his factory in Kyiv, moving to double and triple shifts.

International volunteers are also helping to fill the gap.

Antonina Kumka, a Ukrainian-born Canadian, founded the Ukraine Prosthetic Assistance Project after the conflict in Crimea began in 2014. Supported by the U.S. charity Prosthetika, she is connecting Ukrainian doctors via videoconference with specialists around the world. She is also encouraging prosthetics manufacturers abroad to make donations.

"We don't want funding to send patients abroad — we need them to donate components," she said. "The specialists in Ukraine can do it here. It costs less and it is better for the patient."

But many patients, including Mr. Tkachenko, remain wary of Ukrainian prosthetics. He worries that local doctors are moving slowly to finish his prosthetic limb because they are helping him for free.

"I thought I would come here, and then one to two months later I would rejoin the fight," he said. "But I see now it's going to be a long process."

Ms. Olikh has tried to explain to him the need to be patient, that his body needs time to heal. The area where a limb was amputated changes shape and size in the months following a traumatic injury, a process that she said she has to let finish naturally.

Hoping to encourage him, Ms. Olikh handed him a Parashar hydraulic knee for him to inspect. It would be added to his metal leg, she said, once his walking steadies. He poked and prodded it.

The type of knee did not matter, he said, as long as it helps him achieve his goal: "getting back to my brothers and fighting."

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HEADLINE	05/31 US: advanced rocket systems to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/us/politics/biden-ukraine-rockets.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The United States will send Ukraine advanced rocket systems and munitions as part of a new \$700 million package of military equipment intended to help the Ukrainians fight back against the Russian invasion of their country, President Biden and White House officials said on Tuesday.</p> <p>Mr. Biden announced his decision to provide the rocket systems, which can precisely target an enemy from almost 50 miles away, in an Op-Ed published online Tuesday evening by The New York Times. He said the delivery of the advanced weapons would enable Ukraine to "fight on the battlefield and be in the strongest possible position at the negotiating table."</p>

But a senior administration official said later that the weapons system — the most advanced provided to the Ukrainians to date — was promised only after direct assurances by Ukraine's leaders that they would not use it against targets within Russian territory.

As the war has dragged on, the Biden administration has progressively widened the array of weaponry it has provided to the Ukrainians, and the latest package will also include Javelin antitank missiles, artillery rounds, helicopters and tactical vehicles. But top administration officials have been concerned about provoking a broader war with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia by providing equipment that could allow Ukraine to strike deep inside his country.

That has proved to be a tricky line to walk for the president and his advisers since Mr. Putin sent his troops into Ukraine nearly 100 days ago.

In his article on Tuesday, Mr. Biden described his administration's resolve to support Ukraine in its attempts to repel Russian invaders. But Mr. Biden also offered specific assurances for Mr. Putin that the United States does not intend to provoke a wider conflict or the use of weapons of mass destruction.

"We currently see no indication that Russia has intent to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, though Russia's occasional rhetoric to rattle the nuclear saber is itself dangerous and extremely irresponsible," Mr. Biden wrote. "Let me be clear: Any use of nuclear weapons in this conflict on any scale would be completely unacceptable to us as well as the rest of the world and would entail severe consequences."

Mr. Biden stated bluntly in his article that he did not seek to overthrow Mr. Putin, despite his off-the-cuff remarks during a speech in Poland earlier this year, when he said the Russian president "cannot remain in power." On Tuesday, Mr. Biden presented a different view.

"We do not seek a war between NATO and Russia," he said. "As much as I disagree with Mr. Putin, and find his actions an outrage, the United States will not try to bring about his ouster in Moscow. So long as the United States or our allies are not attacked, we will not be directly engaged in this conflict, either by sending American troops to fight in Ukraine or by attacking Russian forces."

Mr. Biden's administration has already sent Ukraine about \$5 billion worth of antitank and antiaircraft missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, helicopters and other military equipment as the European country seeks to repel Russia's invasion.

Administration officials said the advanced rockets and other equipment will be formally announced on Wednesday, along with a spare parts package that will allow Ukrainians to maintain the artillery equipment that has been provided.

Officials said on Tuesday that Ukraine will be receiving the American High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, which is a satellite-guided precision weapon that carries roughly the same explosive power as a 500-pound bomb dropped from the air.

The system can strike targets up to 48 miles away, a senior administration official told reporters Tuesday evening, well beyond the range of any artillery Ukraine now uses. According to a report published by the Congressional Research Service in June, the Pentagon has spent about \$5.4 billion to buy more than 42,000 such rockets since 1998.

The system could be outfitted with even longer-range rockets, capable of flying nearly 200 miles before striking a target, officials said Tuesday. But Mr. Biden decided against providing those rockets to Ukraine, a senior administration official said.

Mr. Biden had told reporters on Monday that "we're not going to send to Ukraine rocket systems that can strike into Russia."

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HEADLINE	05/31 DOJ seeks air travel federal mask mandate
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/31/biden-administration-asks-court-let-it-impose-mask/
GIST	<p>The Biden administration asked an appeals court to permit the restoration of the federal government's mask mandate on the nation's airlines.</p> <p>In a filing with the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the Justice Department asked the panel to overturn a district court judge's April ruling that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did not have the authority to impose the mandate.</p> <p>Justice Department said the CDC order was "within" the agency's legal authority, though the filing did not directly say the CDC would again force Americans to wear masks on airplanes, buses, taxis, ride-share services and transit terminals.</p> <p>Hours after U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball's April 18 order struck down the mandate, the Biden administration said it would no longer enforce it.</p> <p>Administration spokespeople have often said then, however, that it might appeal Judge Kimball's decision in order to preserve the CDC's power as a matter of law.</p> <p>The CDC did not immediately respond to a query from Reuters news agency on whether the mask order would return if the appeals court agreed Judge Kimball had overreached.</p> <p>"None of the district court's quarrels with the CDC order comes close to showing that the CDC has acted outside the 'zone of reasonableness,'" the Justice Department wrote.</p> <p>DOJ told the appeals court, in a filing made just hours before the appeals court's deadline that CDC findings in early 2021, when the order was first imposed, provided "ample support for the agency's determination that there was good cause to make the order effective without delay."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Day 98 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/01/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-98-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russian forces now control of most of the eastern city of Sievierodonetsk. Serhiy Gaidai, the local governor, said in an online post late on Tuesday that Russian shelling had made it impossible to deliver humanitarian supplies or evacuate people. Civilians were told to stay underground. • President Zelenskiy has blasted the “madness” of bombing a chemical plant in Sievierodonetsk. “Given the presence of large-scale chemical production in Sievierodonetsk, the Russian army’s strikes there, including blind air bombing, are just crazy.” Local officials said a nitric acid tank was hit and posted images of pink smoke billowing. • Zelenskiy said Ukraine’s military forces have had some successes near Kherson and in parts of the Kharkiv region. • Ukraine welcomed EU sanctions but criticised the “unacceptable” delay. Speaking alongside Slovakia’s President Zuzana Caputova in Kyiv, Zelenskiy noted that 50 days had passed between the fifth and sixth sanction packages. • Ukraine was working on an international UN-led operation with naval partners to ensure a safe trade route for food exports, according to Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, who said Russia was playing “hunger games with the world by blocking Ukrainian food exports”. • Ukraine’s giant seed bank is in danger of being destroyed. The genetic code for nearly 2,000 crops rests in underground vaults based in Kharkiv, north-eastern Ukraine, which has come under intense bombing. Read more of the Guardian’s coverage how vital seed banks are in the climate crisis here and here. • The African Union warned EU leaders that Moscow’s blockade of Ukraine’s ports risked “a catastrophic scenario” of food shortages and price rises. Senegal’s president, Macky Sall, who chairs the union, said “the worst is perhaps ahead of us” if current global food supply trends continued. • Ukraine would prosecute 80 suspected war criminals, said the prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova. Representatives of a group of countries investigating Russian war crimes have met with the international criminal court prosecutor, Karim Khan, at The Hague. • A senior Russian lawmaker has suggested kidnapping a Nato defence minister. Oleg Morozov from the United Russia party said on Rossiya-1 state TV he had a “fantastical plot” that a Nato war minister would travel to Kyiv and wake up in Moscow. • Sanctions against Russia are directed at ordinary citizens and motivated by hatred, the former president, Dmitry Medvedev, has said. Medvedev, who advises Vladimir Putin on national security, said on Telegram that the “endless tango of economic sanctions” won’t touch the political elite but have brought losses for big business. • Russia has further cut off gas supplies to Europe. Gazprom turned off the taps to a top Dutch trader and halted flows to some companies in Denmark and Germany. The intensification follows the EU’s decision to place an embargo on most Russian oil imports.
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HEADLINE	06/01 Struggle: find, bury Mariupol’s dead
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/01/makeshift-graves-and-notes-on-doors-the-struggle-to-find-and-bury-mariupol-dead-ukraine
GIST	<p>In one Ukrainian Telegram group for those who have lost loved ones in Mariupol, its more than 26,000 members have one objective: ensuring the thousands who died during the Russian assault on the port city are given a proper burial, and in many cases finding their remains in the first place.</p> <p>The number of bodies in Mariupol is overwhelming. Petro Andryushchenko, an adviser to the Ukrainian mayor, estimated that 22,000 died in the two months of fighting. However, a person among several coordinating burials in the city who spoke on condition of anonymity said they believed the total was closer to 50,000.</p> <p>Some of those in the messenger app group, one of several, know where their loved ones are buried and are navigating the chaotic burial process under the new authorities. Others spend their days scrolling through</p>

social media groups for news, and fear they may never find them, while fellow members post photos and videos of grave markers, as well as photos of handwritten lists of the dead, occasionally with burial locations, written by unknown authors.

With the temperatures rising as summer approaches, the odour of dead bodies wafts down certain streets, people who have been in the city told the Guardian.

There are bodies are still trapped under rubble or in flats or buried in shallow makeshift or mass graves (a number of which appear to have been poorly marked or even unmarked). Others were left in the street and rotted, and some may have disintegrated if they were hit directly or burned in a fire.

“I joined the group to let people know that my father had been killed and, I don’t know, to share my grief,” said Mariana. She said she lost contact with her parents who lived in another part of Mariupol when the phone signal was cut at the beginning of March. The shelling had made it too dangerous to reach them before she left with her children two weeks later. Her father was killed putting out a fire and her mother buried him with her own hands next to their apartment building, before leaving herself, said Mariana, who plans to make the journey back to Mariupol next month to rebury her father properly.

Deaths such as her fathers are among a spreadsheet of more than 1,200 people created by members of the Telegram group, which includes information about how they died and often where they are buried.

The cause of death section listed on the spreadsheet evokes the horrors the encircled civilian population underwent: death from hunger, lack of medicine and lack of medical treatment, heart attack, Covid, stroke. Died when their apartment was bombed, bombed while trying to get water, died while putting out a fire, froze to death, shot dead, and died from shrapnel wounds.

The battle for Mariupol was fought over a densely populated city of an estimated 400,000 people. The Ukrainian army sent shells and missiles out and the Russian army’s response crashed back into residential areas, say residents. They say they still want to know why they were not evacuated and why they became “hostages” in a war that their mayor – who fled on 27 February – said would not happen.

As the barrage of bombs made movement almost impossible, the courtyards between apartment blocks started to fill with makeshift graves dug by residents amid the shelling. Some of the grave markers are handmade, others were given to people by the emergency services who took them from a local funeral home.

But sometimes even makeshift graves were not possible.

A picture in the Telegram group shows a dead person’s name and date of death scrawled across an apartment door with paint, presumably written by a neighbour who wanted to leave a record for whoever would later retrieve the body.

Yulia, who left Mariupol for Russia as an adult many years ago, said she found out through her former classmates on Telegram that her father had died in his apartment in late March. Her father’s neighbour told her he had wrapped him in a blanket, taken him outside in a wheelbarrow and left him next to their building.

“[The neighbour] didn’t bury him because it wasn’t safe. Perhaps some [emergency] services took the body later because it began to warm up and hungry dogs were running around everywhere. I even watched a video of dogs eating corpses, it’s just awful. I’m afraid to even think about it,” said Yulia.

Yulia wrote to the new city agency that has been set up to identify bodies and issue death certificates. They replied that her father was not on their list of identified bodies and asked her to come to Mariupol to give a DNA sample.

“From their letter, it seems his body will never be identified. I think maybe the neighbour failed to leave any documents with his body,” said Yulia, who says she will return to Mariupol as soon as she can to look for her father’s body.

The new authorities say the burial and identification process is in hand and that each body will be buried separately in a humane manner. But Telegram posts by people burying their dead show the process appears to be rife with problems.

Since Russia declared victory in April, Mariupol has come under the control of the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR), a Russian proxy authority created to oversee Ukraine’s occupied eastern Donetsk region in 2014.

Videos shot by the DNR’s TV channels show emergency workers digging up bodies from the makeshift graves and retrieving bodies from the rubble. They say they are in the process of making their way around the city with the aim of burying or reburying all the bodies. The authorities have publicly invited relatives to exhume bodies themselves, but this does not seem to involve supervision.

Bodies are taken to the only Mariupol morgue still functioning, the Metro morgue, to be examined and registered, if the state of the body allows or if ID is found on the body.

Photos of the Metro morgue taken by a Mariupol journalist, Vyacheslav Tverdokhlebov, show piles of bodies in the courtyard next to people with face masks. On Telegram, one person who had been there warned others of the strong smell – which, they write, “starts on your approach”.

“It’s like this: You’re queueing to get your death certificate in the yard and there are just piles of bodies next to you,” Daria said, who left Mariupol at the end of March but returned for two weeks in May to bury her close friend on behalf of his relatives.

If the bodies go unclaimed or unidentified for two weeks, the authorities will bury them in graves marked with numbers, according to Telegram posts written by a representative of Ritual, the only funeral home still operating in the city.

As hundreds of thousands have left the city and cannot easily return, many are trying to employ the services of Ritual from afar.

Ritual, a formerly private-turned state company of the breakaway Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR), offers a paid service to dig up or retrieve a body if its whereabouts are known and bury it. This way, as one of Ritual’s representatives wrote in posts on their Telegram channel, relatives can avoid the stench or worse yet, their loved one’s body being lost in the bureaucratic chaos of Metro morgue or buried in a mass grave.

Satellite images from the company Maxar and a CNN report, both taken after Russia took control of the area, show that Russian forces have dug mass graves. The CNN report, and another video posted on Telegram by Ritual on 9 May, from cemeteries outside Mariupol, show that the mass graves are numbered, and probably relate to a database the authorities are said to be keeping.

Daria and one other person the Guardian spoke to, as well as posts on Telegram by those who had been through the process, say that the DNR authorities have a database with photos of the bodies and other information left on the body.

But not all the bodies that should appear on the database are coming up. Olesya’s husband died and her child was seriously wounded when a rocket hit their apartment in March. Olesya decided her only option was to take her child to a doctor and she left her husband face-down near the entrance of their building. Now she cannot find his body and does not know if he has been buried. But, she says, his documents were next to him in the pocket of his jacket.

	<p>“I think most likely he will be a missing person now,” said Olesya, who said that all the neighbours fled at the same time because their apartment block was burning, along with five other blocks around them.</p> <p>DNR authorities say relatives can give DNA samples for identification, which in theory indicates that they are collecting samples from the bodies. But a person coordinating burials said they had not heard of such a practice or database.</p> <p>If DNA samples are not collected, thousands of bodies may never be identified and the scale and truth of what happened in Mariupol will never be known. Ukraine’s authorities accuse Russia of using the mass graves to cover up their crimes.</p> <p>“They should let the Red Cross in to oversee the process, collect DNA from the bodies and create a database which should be handed over to Ukraine,” said Serhiy Taruta, a Mariupol native, Ukrainian MP and oligarch whose businesses used to employ thousands in the city.</p> <p>*Some names have been changed to protect people’s identities</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Ukraine jails 2 Russia soldiers for 11yrs
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/31/ukraine-jails-two-russian-soldiers-shelling-villages
GIST	<p>Two Russian soldiers have each been sentenced to more than 11 years in jail after a court in central Ukraine found them guilty of firing artillery at civilian areas.</p> <p>The verdict after the trial in the Poltava region came one week after another court in the capital, Kyiv, gave a 21-year-old Russian soldier a life sentence – the country’s first judicial reckoning on Russia’s invasion.</p> <p>The servicemen convicted on Tuesday, Alexander Bobikin and Alexander Ivanov, were handed sentences of 11 years and six months under legislation against “violating the laws and customs of war”.</p> <p>They were found guilty of firing Grad missiles on two villages in the north-eastern Kharkiv region in the early days of the war. The Interfax news agency reported that both previously pleaded guilty.</p> <p>It said their legal defence had requested a more lenient sentence, claiming the soldiers had been following orders and acting under duress.</p> <p>Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST</p> <p>The verdicts this month against Russian servicemen are expected to be the first in a wave of trials. Ukraine says it has already opened thousands of war crime investigations since the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, sent in his troops.</p> <p>Rights organisations have voiced hope that Ukraine’s trials of Russian soldiers will be impartial and transparent. After the conviction in Kyiv of 21-year-old Vadim Shishimarin, the Kremlin said it had not received any information about his case while his trial was under way. Ukrainian lawyers representing the Russian servicemen say they have not been in contact with legal or military officials in Moscow.</p> <p>Ukraine has identified several thousand suspected war crimes in the eastern Donbas region where Russian forces are pressing their offensive, Kyiv’s chief prosecutor separately said on Tuesday.</p> <p>“Of course we started a few thousand cases about what we see in Donbas,” the prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova, told a news conference in The Hague as she met international counterparts.</p> <p>“If we speak about war crimes, it’s about possible transfer of people; we started several cases about possible transfer of children, adult people to different parts of the Russian Federation,” she said. “Then, of course, we can speak about torturing people, killing civilians and destroying civilian infrastructure.”</p>

	<p>Ukrainian authorities did not have access to Russian-held areas of Donbas but they were interviewing evacuees and prisoners of war, Venediktova told the press conference at the headquarters of the EU judicial agency, Eurojust.</p> <p>In total, Ukraine had identified 15,000 war crimes cases across the country since Russia's invasion on 24 February, she added.</p> <p>Ukraine had identified 600 suspects for the "anchor" crime of aggression, including "high level of top military, politicians and propaganda agents of Russian Federation", the prosecutor general said.</p> <p>Nearly 80 suspects had been identified for alleged war crimes that had actually taken place on Ukrainian soil, she added.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Study: 3 shots best preventing infections
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/31/three-jabs-best-for-preventing-covid-infections-global-analysis-finds-vaccine-immunity
GIST	<p>Three doses of the same Covid-19 vaccine or a combination of jabs work equally well in preventing infections, according to the largest study of its kind.</p> <p>While the effectiveness of individual coronavirus vaccines is well known, the evidence around combinations of jabs has been less clear, especially for particular groups such as older people and those who are immunocompromised.</p> <p>Now a global analysis of data from more than 100 million people confirms the number of doses is the key to boosting immunity rather than jab combinations. The findings have been published in the BMJ.</p> <p>Three doses of either the same vaccine or a combination of different types work comparably well in preventing Covid-19 infections, even against different variants, according to the study.</p> <p>Despite a rapid decline in Covid-19 infections and deaths, concerns about waning vaccine immunity and new variants makes it important to understand which vaccine combinations are most effective, the BMJ said.</p> <p>The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) searched 38 World Health Organization Covid-19 databases for published studies and preprints on a weekly basis from 8 March 2022. They identified 53 studies involving 100 million people with 24 combinations of Covid vaccine courses.</p> <p>Receiving three doses of the same vaccine is known as a homologous regimen, while receiving a third dose that differs from those given as two primary doses is called a heterologous regimen.</p> <p>After taking account of differences in study design and quality, CUHK researchers found that three doses of any mRNA vaccine appear to be most effective (96%) against non-severe Covid-19 infections and most effective (95%) in reducing Covid-19 related hospital admissions.</p> <p>But the results also show that any three-dose regimen – heterologous or homologous – induces higher immunity in all age groups, even in the over-65s, than a two-dose homologous regimen.</p> <p>And the study found that in immunocompromised patients, a third mRNA booster dose, as part of a heterologous or homologous regimen, also greatly improves protection compared with two doses.</p> <p>The effectiveness of three-dose vaccine regimens against Covid-19 related death remains uncertain.</p>

	<p>The researchers acknowledged some of the study’s limitations, including that they didn’t evaluate the optimum time interval for prime boost or boosting regimens, owing to limited information.</p> <p>“An mRNA booster is recommended to supplement any primary vaccine course,” the researchers concluded. “Heterologous and homologous three dose regimens work comparably well in preventing Covid-19 infections, even against different variants.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Summer travel season, record gas prices
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/americans-start-summer-travel-season-beset-by-record-gas-prices-11654037695?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>Millions of Americans hit the road over Memorial Day weekend, with record-high gas prices pinching their wallets.</p> <p>The national average price for a gallon of regular unleaded gas hit \$4.62 as of Monday, according to AAA, \$1.58 higher than a year earlier and about 12% above the pre-2022 high of \$4.11 set in 2008. Prices have risen about 11% over the past month, the organization’s figures indicated, and gas was recently above \$4 in all 50 states.</p> <p>The records at the pump come as Americans are contending with four-decade highs in inflation, paying more for everyday purchases including bread and milk. Analysts said gasoline prices so far haven’t changed many motorists’ summer travel plans, in part because of pent-up demand for travel after Covid 19-related restrictions.</p> <p>“Folks have decided, ‘Look, I’ve been good. I’ve been hunkering down for two years. I’m gonna go, and I’m gonna go big,’ ” said AAA spokesman Andrew Gross. The organization said in May that 34.9 million Americans were expected to travel by automobile during the Memorial Day weekend, up 4.5% from 2021.</p> <p>Still, some motorists say they are reconsidering summer road trips. A survey by AAA in March found that two-thirds of Americans felt gas was too expensive when it was at \$3.53 a gallon; if it were to reach \$5—which has happened on the West Coast—three-quarters of drivers said they would need to adjust.</p> <p>Amalia Velázquez, a single mother of three boys who lives in San Diego, isn’t sure whether she will be able to take her children to visit their grandmother to celebrate her birthday in June. Gas prices have cut into Ms. Velázquez’s budget, and her mother lives about 120 miles away in Mexicali, Mexico.</p> <p>Ms. Velázquez said she currently spends \$80 to fill her 2019 Toyota RAV4, up from about \$45 before the pandemic. For now, Ms. Velázquez and her sons are spending less money eating out to save money.</p> <p>“I don’t think I’ll be making that drive anytime soon,” she said of the trip to Mexico.</p> <p>Gasoline prices vary significantly by location based on taxes and access to energy infrastructure. Drivers in California are currently paying the most of any state on average, at \$6.17 a gallon, an increase of \$1.96 from last year, according to AAA. The states with the next highest average prices, Hawaii and Nevada, were also recently above \$5 a gallon.</p> <p>Meanwhile, in Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas—the states with the lowest current average prices—gas was still around \$4 a gallon, though about 50% higher than last year.</p> <p>Gasoline prices rise and fall based on a range of factors. While crude-oil prices have backed off 2022’s March highs, they still remain around \$120 a barrel, or around 70% higher than a year ago. Oil inventories were already tight because of demand caused by economic reopening; Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has further upset the market.</p>

In the U.S., refining capacity declined during the pandemic-driven lockdowns and restrictions. The market has lost about one million barrels of daily petroleum-refining capacity since early 2020, when the U.S. was producing about 19 million barrels of refined petroleum a day.

Analysts are closely tracking the health of the American consumer. Jake Remley, senior portfolio manager at Income Research + Management, said household cash balances remain strong, thanks in part to pandemic monetary stimulus. Recent economic data, however, suggest wage growth is slowing.

“We’ve got some cushion here, and it’s starting to get eroded,” Mr. Remley said.

Analysts say fuel prices could come down if China’s Covid-19 cases lead to further lockdowns or travel restrictions, reducing demand for oil, or Russia and Ukraine reach a cease-fire agreement. They are also watching whether consumers adjust driving habits amid higher costs.

Gasoline prices have been the subject of political debate, putting pressure on the White House. In response, President Biden has released strategic reserves and passed mandates to increase the amount of ethanol blend in fuel in a bid to reduce fuel prices. U.S. officials said last week that Mr. Biden hadn’t ruled out a ban on petroleum exports.

Other refined products have risen even more sharply, with diesel gaining more than 70% so far this year, AAA data shows. Higher diesel prices mean higher input costs for trucks and tractors. Tom Kloza, global head of energy analysis for energy information-services company OPIS, said consumers can expect those costs to reach their pocketbooks.

“It’s not going to be as much of a trickle; it’s going to be more like Niagra Falls as the increases start to come in,” said Mr. Kloza. OPIS is owned by Dow Jones & Co., owner of The Wall Street Journal.

Some consumers are switching vehicles to moderate fuel costs. Tom VanStavern, a motorbike-shop owner in Columbus, Ohio, used to pick up his 8-year-old son from school in a 2015 Ford Transit van that gets 15 miles a gallon. Now, he says, he uses a 2001 Kawasaki motorcycle with a sidecar, which gets about 45 miles a gallon.

Average gas prices in Ohio are \$4.45 a gallon, up \$1.50 from last year.

“Normally for work, I have to drive a van,” said Mr. VanStavern. “It’s gone from being like \$60 to fill up to being \$100, so now I drop the van off at home.”

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HEADLINE	05/30 Fauci: stuck with Covid on ‘chronic’ basis
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/were-stuck-with-covid-on-chronic-basis-says-fauci/
GIST	<p>COVID is here to stay, the country’s top infectious disease expert said Sunday.</p> <p>The persistence of the virus means yearly vaccine booster shots could be in store for everyone, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the White House chief medical adviser, told PIX 11 in an interview.</p> <p>“We’re going to be dealing with this virus on a chronic basis,” Fauci said. “We really hope ... it will reach a level low enough that it doesn’t disrupt us to the extent that it has over the past couple of years.”</p> <p>In recent weeks, COVID case numbers have been increasing nationwide. Average daily case numbers have risen about 26% around the country, according to Johns Hopkins University.</p> <p>Average daily case numbers in New York City have nearly doubled, to 4,214 as of Tuesday, according to the Health Department.</p> <p>Fauci noted while many cases are going unreported, hospitalizations are a good gauge of the outbreak.</p>

New York City was averaging about 70 COVID hospitalizations per day on Tuesday, far below recent winter peaks.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended a second COVID vaccine booster shot for those ages 50 and older.

All Americans can expect to get regular boosters in the future, according to Fauci, who compared the situation to annual flu shots.

“We know that immunity wanes over time,” he said.

“Depending upon what this virus does, there is certainly a reasonably good chance that we will have the same sort of situation that we have with influenza, where every year you have to re-boost people to keep that protection up,” Fauci added.

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HEADLINE	05/31 FAA to keep closer eye on Boeing
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/federal-regulators-boeing/507-312bfe4a-1bba-4324-b9fa-b2f520858533
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Boeing employees will still be allowed to perform some safety analysis on the company’s aircraft, but for three more years instead of the five-year extension the company requested, federal regulators have determined.</p> <p>Federal Aviation Administration officials indicated Tuesday that the agency’s decision on the safety-related work was designed to keep a closer eye on Boeing.</p> <p>Under rules in place for more than a decade, employees of aircraft manufacturing companies can be deputized to do certain tasks for the FAA. That practice came under more scrutiny after two deadly crashes involving Boeing 737 Max jets and allegations that Boeing employees misled regulators about a key flight system on the planes.</p> <p>Boeing’s ability to do that work for the FAA was due to expire Tuesday.</p> <p>In a letter to Boeing, an FAA safety official said a three-year renewal was “more appropriate” than a five-year extension.</p> <p>“There are multiple in work improvements that the FAA would like to assess within the Boeing organization over the next three years,” Ian Won, acting manager of the FAA office that oversees Boeing, told the company.</p> <p>The list of items that the FAA wants Boeing to complete in the next three years includes ensuring that employees who help the FAA are protected from pressure by company managers, and making sure that Boeing quickly corrects any problems it finds.</p> <p>Boeing issued a statement, which in its entirety read, “As always, we are committed to working transparently with the FAA through their detailed and rigorous oversight processes.”</p> <p>The FAA also said its inspectors — and not Boeing employees — will continue to be responsible for issuing final safety certificates for all new Boeing 737 Max and 787 jets rolling off the company assembly lines. That was a step taken in November 2020, as the FAA prepared to lift a 19-month grounding of the Max following crashes in 2018 and 2019 that killed 346 people.</p>

	Deliveries of the 787, which Boeing calls the Dreamliner, have been halted most of the past two years because of a series of production problems. That is depriving Boeing of cash, because buyers typically pay a large portion of the purchase price for jets on delivery.
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HEADLINE	05/31 Spokane Transit: hiring, retention bonus
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-transit-authority-offering-thousands-hiring-and-retention-bonuses/293-50687203-7785-48d8-86ed-09165315b640
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — In an effort to combat the labor shortage and support service growth, Spokane Transit Authority is offering thousands of dollars for new and current employees through 2023.</p> <p>New employees can receive \$1,500 once hired and an additional \$1,500 will be available after a 6-month probation period. This brings the total hiring bonus to \$3,000 if someone is employed by STA by the end of 2023.</p> <p>New hires and current employees are eligible for up to \$6,000 in retention bonuses. The money is distributed over three \$2,000 installment periods. The day someone is hired determines how much money they could receive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 1, 2022 to November 30, 2022 • December 1, 2022 to May 15, 2023 • May 16, 2023 to November 30, 2023 <p>Chief Operations Officer Brandon Rapez-Betty said these incentives will benefit STA long term.</p> <p>"We have some expansion targets over the next two years," Rapez-Betty said. "And with the current labor shortage, we recognize that STA needed to be doing something different to stand out among employers here in the Spokane region. So, that's where we got the background for the hiring and retention incentives."</p> <p>The money comes from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.</p> <p>Rapez-Betty said COVID-19 took a toll on STA.</p> <p>"In that first phase, we did reduce service by about 11%," Rapez-Betty said. "And that was because we cancelled the commuter routes, the express routes, because people weren't using them to go to work during the shutdown. Then, we did see during the Omicron spike, a significant episode of absenteeism. So people were either out because of exposure or because of illness or illness in their family. And we did have to reduce the service again temporarily."</p> <p>Rapez-Betty said this incentive will help prepare STA as it moves to launch the City Line service system. The launch is projected for July 2023.</p> <p>Since advertising the offer, Rapez-Betty said there has been a significant jump in bus driver applications. STA is seeing its biggest class of prospective drivers with 18. According to Rapez-Betty, classes before this year maxed out at 12 drivers.</p> <p>Despite the increase in driver applications, Rapez-Betty assures the bonus incentives are available for all STA positions.</p> <p>"Our philosophy is that it takes every single employee at STA to deliver transit service to our region," Rapez-Betty said. "And so that retention incentive and hiring incentive is available for all positions."</p> <p>Rapez-Betty said this is a "once in a very long while opportunity," and will likely not be offered again unless certain factors force a pandemic and another significant labor shortage.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Alarm: rise in kids' self-harm, suicides
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/new-state-poison-exposure-data-shows-alarming-jump-in-self-harm-and-suspected-suicide-in-children
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON - New poison exposure data from the Washington Poison Center shows an alarming jump in self-harm and suspected suicides in children as young as 10 years old. A large proportion of cases are among girls.</p> <p>From 2019 to 2021, cases of self-harm or suspected suicide increased 58% in patients ages 6-12 years and 37% in patients ages 13-17 years, according to the WA Poison Center. The agency said it's likely an underrepresentation of adolescent self-harm and suspected suicide in Washington.</p> <p>The Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics said children going to emergency departments for suicide account for more than 1.1 million encounters a year, a number that has doubled in the past decade.</p> <p>Behavioral health professionals said all the data even before the pandemic started point to a youth mental health crisis.</p> <p>Dr. Kira Mauseth, the co-lead for the Behavioral Health Strike Team for WA Department of Health, said there are layers of concern contributing to the current youth behavioral health issues including the pandemic.</p> <p>"A lot of the lived experience that these kids have had over the last two years has been objectively such a large part of their lives so far, and it's been really, really challenging," said Mauseth. "It's been hard socially, they felt disconnected. They may have had academic struggles. They may have been experiencing family struggles with their primary caregivers and their parents, where those parents are under stress so there's a trickle-down into the family."</p> <p>Vera Abariy is the Teen Link Youth Services Manager. Teen Link is a peer-to-peer crisis call center in King County.</p> <p>Abariy said in recent months she has noticed a spike in suicide ideations and substance abuse in callers who are at times only eight or nine years old.</p> <p>"We certainly have seen youth suicide, unfortunately, but the numbers and the ages that we're seeing, this is really concerning to me," said State Representative Alicia Rule of Legislative District 42.</p> <p>Representative Rule is a long-time social worker and a former school counselor who was a prime sponsor of a bill that has been signed into law and provides school with more nurses and mental health and family support professionals.</p> <p>"It means we have those trauma-informed professionals right where the children are at, which is so often in school. So those folks will be trained in this process to be able to tell what the difference is and know how to ask the right questions and make those kind of really good referrals for families and children who might need that extra support," said Rule.</p> <p>Seattle-King County Public Health said there is no typical suicide victim, but there are common characteristics. The most common warning signs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A previous suicide attempt • Current talk of suicide or making a plan • Strong wish to die or a preoccupation with death • Giving away prized possessions • Signs of depression, such as moodiness, hopelessness and withdrawal • Increased alcohol and/or drug use • Hinting at not being around in the future or saying goodbye

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences drastic changes in behavior <p>Mauseth said the healthiest step a family can take is to create a culture of communication within the family, check in consistently with each child and ask open-ended questions.</p> <p>"If you have a sense of baseline, and you're checking in regularly and really asking them how they're doing, even if they're not always answering the question you can immediately begin to see when things change," said Mauseth.</p> <p>Both Mauseth and Rep. Rule said to keep your home as safe as possible and lock up your over-the-counter and prescription medication.</p> <p>"If they are experiencing some of these things with their children, they're not alone, and it's really good and okay to ask for help," said Rep. Rule.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Putin's shadow soldiers expanding in Africa
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/world/africa/wagner-group-africa.html
GIST	<p>Mercenaries are enjoying a resurgence in Africa, hired to fight in some of the continent's most intractable conflicts. Perhaps the most famous outfit is the Wagner Group, a nebulous network that combines military force with commercial and strategic interests, now at the vanguard of Russia's expanding ambitions in Africa.</p> <p>Wagner fighters have been active in the wars of Mali, Central African Republic, Mozambique and Libya. They ally with embattled leaders and militia commanders who can pay for their services in cash, or with lucrative mining concessions for precious minerals like gold, diamonds and uranium. Wagner troops have faced frequent accusations of torture, civilian killings and other abuses.</p> <p>But Wagner is far more than a simple guns-for-gold scheme. Operating through a sprawling web of shell companies, it has become a byword for a broad spectrum of Kremlin-backed operations in over a dozen African countries. Wagner meddles in politics, props up autocrats and orchestrates digital propaganda campaigns. It donates food to the poor and produces action movies set in Africa. It has even organized a beauty pageant.</p> <p>The Kremlin denies any link to Wagner. But American and European officials, as well as most experts, say it is an unofficial tool of Russian power — a cheap and deniable way for President Vladimir V. Putin to expand his reach, bolster his war chest against Western sanctions, and expand his influence on a continent where sympathy for Russia remains relatively high.</p> <p>"It's a power play by Russia," said Pauline Bax, deputy Africa director at the International Crisis Group. "Through Wagner, it wants to see to what extent it can spread its influence in Africa. I think the results have surprised a lot of people."</p> <p>Here's a look at how Wagner has spread across Africa, and why its operations are increasingly important to Mr. Putin.</p> <p>How Wagner Got Its Name, and Went to Africa</p> <p>Wagner emerged during Mr. Putin's first assault on Ukraine in 2014, when its mercenaries fought alongside pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas region. Its commander was Dmitry Utkin, a retired Russian Special Forces commander said to be fascinated by Nazi history and culture.</p> <p>The group's name, and Mr. Utkin's military call sign, is taken from the composer Richard Wagner, Hitler's favorite. Some of the group's fighters share that ideology: Ancient Norse symbols favored by white extremists have been photographed on Wagner equipment in Africa and the Middle East.</p>

Wagner expanded to Syria in 2015, tasked with bolstering President Bashar al-Assad and seizing oil and gas fields, [American officials said](#). In 2016, Mr. Putin awarded Mr. Utkin with military honors at a banquet in the Kremlin. A year later, the United States imposed [sanctions on Mr. Utkin](#) for his activities with Wagner.

The group turned to Africa in 2017 under the apparent guidance of [Yevgeny V. Prigozhin](#), a Russian tycoon known as “Putin’s chef.”

Like Mr. Putin, Mr. Prigozhin hails from St. Petersburg, where he once ran a hot-dog stall before setting up a catering business that prospered on lucrative Kremlin contracts. The United States [indicted him in 2018](#) on accusations that he financed a Russian troll factory accused of meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

In Africa, Wagner began to advise tottering dictators, run social media disinformation campaigns and deploy teams of fake election monitors, according to Western officials, experts and United Nations investigators. Companies linked to Mr. Prigozhin operated gold and diamond mines.

Mr. Prigozhin denies any link to Wagner, and has even questioned the group’s existence. “The Wagner legend is just a legend,” he said in a written response to questions.

He may be technically correct: No longer a single company, Wagner has become the brand name for an unofficial Russian network spanning the continent, experts say.

Since 2016 the US. has imposed at least seven sets of sanctions on Mr. Prigozhin, his companies and his associates, [singling out](#) his yacht and three private jets. Facebook and Twitter [have removed](#) hundreds of fake accounts run by his associates. Russian investigative news outlets [have documented](#) his close ties to Mr. Putin and the Russian defense ministry.

That profile makes Mr. Prigozhin quite different from other Russian oligarchs who made their fortunes through Russian state privatizations in the 1990s, experts say.

“He’s not an independent businessman per se,” said Samuel Ramani of the Royal United Services Institute, a London-based nonprofit, and the author of a forthcoming book on Russia in Africa. “His business interests are very tightly tied to what Wagner does, and he gets a cut by being a middleman in deals between African leaders and the Kremlin.”

Where Wagner Works

One of Wagner’s earliest forays on the continent was a disaster.

In 2019 it deployed about 160 fighters to the gas-rich, Muslim-majority Cabo Delgado region, in northern Mozambique. But within weeks, rebels with a local Islamic State affiliate killed [at least seven Wagner troops](#), American officials said. A few months later, the Russians pulled out.

Wagner appeared to learn from those mistakes in Central African Republic, where it arrived in 2018 to protect the besieged president, Faustin-Archange Touadéra. After training local security forces, it helped the army to repel a major Islamist offensive in early 2021.

But those modest gains came at a high cost: United Nations investigators [found that Wagner forces killed civilians](#), looted homes and shot worshipers at a mosque. Critics noted that the operation focused on regions where Mr. Prigozhin’s companies were mining for diamonds.

In Libya, Wagner fighters supported a failed assault on the capital, Tripoli, in 2019 by Khalifa Hifter, a power hungry commander. Thousands of Wagner fighters remain stationed at four bases across Libya, mostly near [the country’s oil fields](#), Western officials and analysts say.

In Sudan, Wagner obtained gold mining concessions and tried, unsuccessfully, to save the country's autocratic leader, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who [was toppled in April 2019](#).

Now Wagner's main Sudanese partner is General Mohamed Hamdan, a powerful paramilitary commander who [flew to Moscow](#) on the eve of the war in Ukraine for meetings with senior Russian officials.

Perhaps Wagner's most contentious operation is in Mali, where Wagner forces arrived in December 2021 amid what [the U.S. State Department called](#) "a barrage of targeted disinformation to hide its arrival and activities." Its fighters quickly joined the fight against Islamist insurgents.

But by mid-April, Wagner had been involved in more than a dozen incidents in which nearly 500 people died, according to researchers and United Nations reports.

More Than Mercenaries

In addition to providing hired guns, Russia has tried to shape the politics of at least a dozen African countries with social media and political influence campaigns.

Last year the U.S. treasury department [identified](#) what it called "a front company for Prigozhin's influence operations in Africa" that it said had sponsored phony monitoring missions in Zimbabwe, Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa and Mozambique.

In 2019, two Russians employed by Mr. Prigozhin met with a son of the former Libyan dictator, Muammar el-Qaddafi, only to get thrown in jail. A Prigozhin-linked company later [made a movie about the Russians' ordeal](#), portraying their captors as violent sadists. The detainees [were released](#) in December 2020.

"Russians don't abandon their own!" said Mr. Prigozhin's company, Concord, in a statement.

Since October 2019, Facebook has [shut down](#) over 300 fake Facebook and Instagram accounts linked to Mr. Prigozhin that it said targeted a dozen African countries.

Wagner fights through popular culture, too. In Central African Republic, Mr. Prigozhin's companies [sponsored a beauty contest](#), funded a radio station, and last year released a movie, "Touriste," that glorified the actions of Wagner mercenaries in that country.

In December, [another Prigozhin-financed movie](#) aired on Russian TV, this time about Wagner's bloody misadventures in Mozambique. Wagner maintains a discreet presence in that country: after its fighters withdrew in 2020, they left behind a small cyberwarfare cell that is employed by the Mozambique government, a Western security official in Africa said, citing European intelligence reports.

The Payoff for Putin

Mr. Putin signaled his ambitions for Russia in Africa at a summit of African leaders in Sochi in 2019, when he described the continent as a place of ["significant opportunities"](#) for the Kremlin.

That expansion is part of Mr. Putin's broader desire to re-establish Russia as a great power, analysts say, pitting him in part against China, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and other countries that have jockeyed for position in Africa as Western influence wanes.

Some African leaders are drawn to Moscow by weapons: Russia has become the largest arms supplier in Africa. But Mr. Putin is also tapping into deep historical and political currents.

Many African nations have been [reluctant to join Western condemnation](#) of Russia's assault on Ukraine — some because of lingering Cold War sympathies, but many others out of frustration with what they see as Western disregard for Africa.

In West Africa, Russia is exploiting a growing wave of anti-French sentiment in countries like Mali, where the arrival of Wagner operatives led to a departure of French soldiers and diplomats this year. A military coup in Burkina Faso was welcomed by demonstrators waving Russian flags. And in [Cameroon, officials signed a defense agreement](#) with Russia in April that some saw as a possible precursor to a Wagner deployment.

A second Russia-Africa summit is scheduled [for November](#). This time, the proposed venue is Mr. Putin's home city of St. Petersburg — which also happens to be Mr. Prigozhin's base of operations.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Benefits of economic resurgence of Tribes
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article261793687.html
GIST	<p>Washington Tribes contributed \$5.6 billion in 2020 in gross state product and employed one in every 86 Washingtonians, according to the latest economic and community benefits report from the Washington Indian Gaming Association.</p> <p>Though Tribes accounted for \$6.6 billion in gross state product in 2019 — marking a \$1 billion loss during the pandemic — billions of dollars in wages, purchasing power and state and local taxes are also highlighted in the report.</p> <p>The report, put together by economist Jonathan Taylor, looks at the most currently available data from 23 of the state's 29 federally recognized Tribes, noting decreases in unemployment and increases in college attainment and income for Washington Natives living on reservations. Taylor's a senior policy associate at the Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona.</p> <p>"This report clears up misconceptions about the economic activity and impact of Tribal governments and our enterprises. If you look at a timeline of Indian gaming and rates of unemployment, health care or education, you would see a direct correlation. We also diversify our economies with community health centers, golf, timber, convention halls and music venues," said Washington Indian Gaming Association Executive Director Rebecca George in an interview with McClatchy.</p> <p>"Indian gaming is finally moving the needle in the right direction, but we still have a long way to go. The needs of Indian people still remain so acute. Indian gaming and Tribal enterprises help fill in the gap."</p> <p>Remaining one of the top ten employers in the state, Tribal government and enterprises including casinos, markets, gas stations and timber account for over 37,000 jobs — meaning Tribes outrank Costco or Walmart in the state. The report estimates 54,000 Washington jobs trace back to Tribes.</p> <p>"If Tribes were out-of-state corporations bringing this economic activity and public-spiritedness to Washington, legislators would likely offer tax waivers or reductions," Taylor wrote in the report. "Washington has substantially benefited from the economic and social resurgence in Indian Country and will for years to come."</p> <p>The report notes 72% of the employees are not Native, meaning Tribes are providing jobs for surrounding communities.</p> <p>"We're rooted here. We're not a corporation that will pick up and move," George said.</p> <p>TAXES AND TRIBAL ECONOMIES</p> <p>Washington Tribes paid a total of \$1.2 billion in state and local taxes, according to the report.</p> <p>Two studies cited in the report note Tribal governments face unique challenges, relying on revenue generated by their government-owned enterprises to fund essential services as opposed to taxes.</p> <p>"We have our own fire and police departments and health services," George said.</p>

Under the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Washington law and mutual agreements, Tribes pay at a state and national level for gaming regulation and reimbursement to local governments for community services like government, fire and police; smoking cessation and problem gambling; infrastructure and roads maintenance and additionally, charitable donations, using gaming dollars and fuel and cigarette taxes.

“The costs of Tribal enterprises don’t come at a cost to tax payers,” George said. “There’s this idea that we don’t pay taxes. I think it’s a real misconception.

Gaming was really one of the first opportunities we had for access to capital. Gaming dollars is essentially our tax base, 100% of Tribal enterprise profits are government revenue.” Gaming revenue is invested into local communities for things such as schools, health care, housing, public safety, natural resources, charities, transportation, environmental restoration and more, George said.

“Reservation land is held in trust by the federal government and there’s little opportunity to develop. Indian gaming generates revenue that is reinvested in Tribal government programs, state and local communities. Billions of dollars in wages and vendor purchases flow off the reservations almost immediately and into the general economy of our state,” she said.

IMPROVING NATIVE LIVES

Over the past 30 years, Native people living on Washington reservations saw their inflation-adjusted incomes rise 46% and unemployment fall 31% and college attainment increased by 65%, according to the report.

“My dad was chairman of the Tribe. I was 15 when the casino opened and remember the message of the day was jobs, jobs, jobs,” George said. “I didn’t have an understanding of why that was so important, but now I know we had no other jobs. This was some of the first few jobs outside of working for Tribal government that was available to us. These are well-paying jobs with health benefits and career paths to management.”

In 2018, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found only “minor” improvements for Native people in efforts from the federal government.

“Federal funding for Native American programs across the government remains grossly inadequate to meet the most basic needs the federal government is obligated to provide,” the Commission wrote.

Indian healthcare is funded at a fraction of other healthcare programs — nearly 50% of Medicaid in 2017 and a quarter of the U.S. per capita.

“While income on reservations have grown at a more rapid rate than a state citizen, we’re still 50% behind. Being that there’s many health disparities, especially during the pandemic. Health care is a big priority,” she said.

Tribes are also taking a culturally relevant approach to problem gambling, George said.

“We take the health of our community very seriously. We work on multiple fronts to address the needs of those who suffer from gambling addiction. Tribes fund over \$3 million a year for prevention, outreach, treatment and self-exclusion programs and support non-profit and government programs to get help to those in need and their families — Native or not,” George said.

IMPACTS OF COVID

Tribes implemented public health mandates and worked with local, state and federal health officials to establish protocols throughout the pandemic. Native communities suffered high transmission rates and losses, causing Tribal governments to close down Tribal casinos, schools and enterprises. Native

Americans later became the most vaccinated group in the country, with some Washington Tribes participating in vaccine trials.

“At the onset of the pandemic, Tribal governments tended to the needs of their own reservation populations. We went to great lengths to alleviate the economic fallout of COVID to our communities,” George said.

Before the pandemic, more than 75% of Tribal budgets came from Tribal enterprises including gaming, compared to the 1960s and 1970s, when Tribes were predominantly reliant on federal funding, the report states.

Tribe accounted for \$6.6 billion in gross state product in 2019 and \$5.6 billion in 2020.

In 2019, only 20% of Tribal budgets came from grants and contracts. This increased to 33% in 2020 as a result of federal relief.

“It remains unclear how persistent this shift in federal funding will be. Still, the data in 2019 corresponds to that of 2017 and earlier, indicating that Tribes were sustaining their fiscal independence before the pandemic,” Taylor wrote.

Though casinos were closed for much of the year, Tribes still paid \$26.5 million to the Washington State Gambling Commission in 2020. Despite the pandemic, this was only about \$5 million less than the previous year.

“Were it not for COVID-19, Tribes would be an even greater presence, and Tribal resilience promises a complete recovery when it becomes possible,” the report reads.

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HEADLINE	05/31 B.C. 3yr test: decriminalize certain drugs
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Canada-to-temporarily-decriminalize-certain-drugs-17210058.php
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Canada’s government said Tuesday it will allow British Columbia to try a three-year experiment in decriminalizing possession of small amounts of drugs, seeking to stem a record number of overdose deaths by easing fear of arrest by users in need of help.</p> <p>The policy approved by federal officials doesn’t legalize the substances, but Canadians in the Pacific coast province who possess up to 2.5 grams of illicit drugs for personal use will not be arrested or charged.</p> <p>The three-year exemption taking effect Jan. 31 will apply to drug users 18 and over and include opioids, cocaine, methamphetamine and MDMA, also known as ecstasy.</p> <p>“Stigma and fear of criminalization cause some people to hide their drug use, use alone, or use in other ways that increase the risk of harm. This is why the Government of Canada treats substance use as a health issue, not a criminal one,” tweeted Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada’s chief public health officer.</p> <p>The province’s health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, said that “we are taking an important step forward to removing that fear and shame and stigma.”</p> <p>“This is not one single thing that will reverse this crisis but it will make a difference,” she added.</p> <p>Dana Larsen, a drug policy reform activist, called the announcement “a step in the right direction,” but said he would prefer to see development of a safe drug supply.</p> <p>“It’s not going to stop anybody dying of an overdose or drug poisoning,” Larsen said. “The drugs are still going to be contaminated.”</p>

"I think we need stores where you can go in and find legal heroin, legal cocaine and legal ecstasy and things like that for adults," he said. "The real solution to this problem is to treat it like alcohol and tobacco."

Alissa Greer, an assistant professor at Simon Fraser University who has a doctorate in public health, said a regulated decriminalization of drugs could help lessen overdose deaths.

She said it would be good for users to be able to obtain drugs from "a regulated supply through various models, whether that's a prescription model, a pharmacy model, more of a compassion club model ... rather than going down to 7-Eleven and buying heroin."

British Columbia is the first Canadian province to apply for an exemption from Canada's drug laws.

In 2001, Portugal became the first country in the world to decriminalize the consumption of all drugs. People caught with less than a 10-day supply of any drug are usually sent to a local commission, consisting of a doctor, lawyer and social worker, where they learn about treatment and available medical services.

In 2020, Oregon voted to become the first U.S. state to decriminalize hard drugs. Under the change, possession of controlled substances is a newly created Class E "violation," instead of a felony or misdemeanor. It carries a maximum \$100 fine, which can be waived if the person calls a hotline for a health assessment. The call can lead to addiction counseling and other services.

Carolyn Bennett, federal minister of mental health and addictions, said the experiment in British Columbia could serve as a template for other jurisdictions in Canada.

"This time-limited exemption is the first of its kind in Canada," she said. "Real-time adjustments will be made upon receiving analysis of any data that indicates a need to change."

Since 2016, there have been over 9,400 deaths due to toxic illicit drugs in British Columbia, with a one-year record of 2,224 in 2021.

Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart said he gets emails every Monday on drug deaths, including nine last week and 12 the week before. He said one week it was his own family member.

"I felt like crying, and I still feel like crying. This is a big, big thing," Stewart said.

The 2.5-gram limit set by federal officials for the experiment falls short of the 4.5 grams requested by British Columbia. The higher amount already had been called too low a threshold by some drug-user groups that have said the province didn't adequately consult them.

Sheila Malcolmson, British Columbia's minister of mental health, said fear of being criminalized has led many people to hide their addiction and use drugs alone.

"Using alone can mean dying alone, particularly in this climate of tragically increased illicit drug toxicity," Malcolmson said.

She said the coroner in British Columbia reports that between five and seven people die a day in the province from overdoses and that half of those happen in a private home, often when people are alone.

"Fear and shame keeps drug use a secret," she said.

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/31/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#the-who-acts-to-speed-up-its-response-to-global-health-emergencies
GIST	<p>The World Health Organization agreed Monday to form a committee that aims to better respond to global health emergencies, with some member states acknowledging the shortcomings of the organization in its response to the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>The new committee will convene as soon as possible following the declaration of any international public health emergency to provide guidance to the W.H.O.'s executive board and director general, according to a draft decision published Friday.</p> <p>When the coronavirus was first declared an international public health emergency, there was no such immediate consultation, Clemens Martin Auer of Austria, who proposed the resolution, told the W.H.O. executive board on Monday.</p> <p>"This was probably one of the weakest points during the last pandemic," he said, adding that he hoped the committee would become "an indispensable part of the new global architecture on health emergency."</p> <p>German Escobar Morales, of Colombia, told the executive board that the Covid-19 pandemic had shown that global health groups "could have responded better to this crisis."</p> <p>The proposal to establish the Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response was agreed upon unanimously by the 34 members of the organization's executive board and was instigated partially in response to criticism of the W.H.O.'s initial response to the coronavirus pandemic, which rapidly spread across the globe and has now killed at least six million people.</p> <p>The committee would have sped the world's response to Covid-19, said Michael Toole, a researcher at the Burnet Institute, a medical institute in Australia. Had it existed before the Covid-19 outbreak, it would have begun identifying how to mitigate it within 24 hours of the emergency declaration in January 2020, he said.</p> <p>"What they would have looked at more carefully was whether this virus, Covid, was spreading from person to person," he said. "Initially, China and then W.H.O. said there was no evidence that it was being spread person to person, that all the cases came from that animal market."</p> <p>But the committee will not necessarily have the authority to investigate an emergency on the ground or declare public health emergencies, Professor Toole said.</p> <p>In January 2021, a report prepared by the organization's own panel revealed how a series of missteps by governments and public health organizations, including the W.H.O. itself, had helped the virus to spread. The new committee will meet at least twice annually, and "as soon as reasonably practicable, and ideally within 24 hours" following the official declaration of an international public health emergency, W.H.O. documents say.</p> <p>There will be 14 members in total, with two representatives from each region, according to the documents, which also say that the aim is for the committee to hold its first meeting before the end of October 2022.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Omicron wave, death rates up older people
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/31/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#omicron-deaths-age-65-elderly
GIST	Despite strong levels of vaccination among older people, Covid killed them at vastly higher rates during this winter's Omicron wave than it did last year, preying on long delays since their last shots and the variant's ability to skirt immune defenses.

This winter's wave of deaths in older people belied the Omicron variant's relative mildness. Almost as many Americans 65 and older died in four months of the Omicron surge as did in six months of the Delta wave, even though the Delta variant, for any one person, tended to cause more severe illness.

While overall per capita Covid death rates have fallen, older people still account for an overwhelming share of them.

"This is not simply a pandemic of the unvaccinated," said Andrew Stokes, an assistant professor in global health at Boston University who studies age patterns of Covid deaths. "There's still exceptionally high risk among older adults, even those with primary vaccine series."

Covid deaths, though always concentrated in older people, have in 2022 skewed toward older people more than they did at any point since vaccines became widely available.

That swing in the pandemic has intensified pressure on the Biden administration to protect older Americans, with health officials in recent weeks encouraging everyone 50 and older to get a second booster and introducing new models of distributing antiviral pills.

In much of the country, though, the booster campaign remains listless and disorganized, older people and their doctors said. Patients, many of whom struggle to drive or get online, have to maneuver through an often labyrinthine health care system to receive potentially lifesaving antivirals.

Nationwide Covid deaths in recent weeks have been near the lowest levels of the pandemic, below an average of 400 a day. But the mortality gap between older and younger people has grown: Middle-aged Americans, who suffered a large share of pandemic deaths last summer and fall, are now benefiting from new stores of immune protection in the population as Covid deaths once again cluster around older people.

And the new wave of Omicron subvariants may create additional threats: While hospitalizations in younger age groups have remained relatively low, admission rates among people 70 and older in the Northeast have climbed to one-third of the winter Omicron wave's towering peak.

"I think we are going to see the death rates rising," said Dr. Sharon Inouye, a geriatrician and a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. "It is going to become more and more risky for older adults as their immunity wanes."

Harold Thomas Jr., 70, of Knoxville, Tenn., is one of many older Americans whose immunity may be waning because he has not received a booster shot. The Covid States Project, an academic group, recently estimated that among people 65 and older, 13 percent are unvaccinated, 3 percent have a single Moderna or Pfizer shot and another 14 percent are vaccinated but not boosted.

When vaccines first arrived, Mr. Thomas said, the state health department made getting them "convenient" by administering shots at his apartment community for older people. But he did not know of any such effort for booster doses. On the contrary, he remembered a state official publicly casting doubt on boosters as they became available.

"The government wasn't sure about the booster shot," he said. "If they weren't sure about it, and they're the ones who put it out, why would I take it?" Mr. Thomas said Covid recently killed a former boss of his and hospitalized an older family friend.

Deaths have fallen from the heights of the winter wave in part because of growing levels of immunity from past infections, experts said. For older people, there is also a grimmer reason: So many of the most fragile Americans were killed by Covid over the winter that the virus now has fewer targets in that age group.

But scientists warned that many older Americans remained susceptible. To protect them, geriatricians called on nursing homes to organize in-home vaccinations or mandate additional shots.

In the longer term, scientists said that policymakers needed to address the economic and medical ills that have affected especially nonwhite older Americans, lest Covid continue cutting so many of their lives short.

“I don’t think we should treat the premature death of older adults as a means of ending the pandemic,” Dr. Stokes said. “There are still plenty of susceptible older adults — living with comorbid conditions or living in multigenerational households — who are highly vulnerable.”

The pattern of Covid deaths this year has recreated the dynamics from 2020 — before vaccines were introduced, when the virus killed older Americans at markedly higher rates. Early in the pandemic, mortality rates steadily climbed with each extra year of age, Dr. Stokes and his collaborators found in a recent study.

That changed last summer and fall, during the Delta surge. Older people were getting vaccinated more quickly than other groups: By November, the vaccination rate in Americans 65 and older was roughly 20 percentage points higher than that of those in their 40s. And critically, those older Americans had received vaccines relatively recently, leaving them with strong levels of residual protection.

As a result, older people suffered from Covid at lower rates than they had been before vaccines became available. Among people 85 and older, the death rate last fall was roughly 75 percent lower than it had been in the winter of 2020, Dr. Stokes’s recent study found.

At the same time, the virus walloped younger and less vaccinated Americans, many of whom were also returning to in-person work. Death rates for white people in their late 30s more than tripled last fall compared to the previous winter. Death rates for Black people in the same age group more than doubled.

The rebalancing of Covid deaths was so pronounced that, among Americans 80 and older, overall deaths returned to prepandemic levels in 2021, according to a study posted online in February. The opposite was true for middle-aged Americans: Life expectancy in that group, which had already dropped more than it had among the same age range in Europe, fell even further in 2021.

“In 2021, you see the mortality impact of the pandemic shift younger,” said Ridhi Kashyap, a lead author of that study and a demographer at the University of Oxford.

By the time the highly contagious Omicron variant took over, researchers said, more older Americans had gone a long time since their last Covid vaccination, weakening their immune defenses.

As of mid-May, more than one-quarter of Americans 65 and older had not had their most recent vaccine dose within a year. And more than half of people in that age group had not been given a shot in the last six months.

The Omicron variant was better than previous versions of the virus at evading those already weakening immune defenses, reducing the effectiveness of vaccines against infection and more serious illness. That was especially true for older people, whose immune systems respond less aggressively to vaccines in the first place.

For some people, even three vaccine doses appear to become less protective over time against Omicron-related hospital admissions. A study published recently in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* found that trend held for people with weakened immune systems, a category that older Americans were likelier to fall into. Sara Tartof, the study’s lead author and an epidemiologist at Kaiser Permanente in Southern California, said that roughly 9 percent of people 65 and older in the study were immunocompromised, compared with 2.5 percent of adults under 50.

During the Omicron wave, Covid death rates were once again dramatically higher for older Americans than younger ones, Dr. Stokes said. Older people also made up an overwhelming share of the excess

deaths — the difference between the number of people who actually died and the number who would have been expected to die if the pandemic had never happened.

Dr. Jeremy Faust, an emergency physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, found in a recent study that excess deaths were more heavily concentrated in people 65 and older during the Omicron wave than the Delta surge. Overall, the study found, there were more excess deaths in Massachusetts during the first eight weeks of Omicron than during the 23-week period when Delta dominated.

As older people began dying at higher rates, Covid deaths also came to include higher proportions of vaccinated people. In March, about 40 percent of the people who died from Covid were vaccinated, according to an analysis of figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Fewer older Americans have also been infected during the pandemic than younger people, leading to lower levels of natural immunity. As of February, roughly one-third of people 65 and older showed evidence of prior infections, compared with about two-thirds of adults under 50.

Long-ago Covid cases do not prevent future infections, but reinfected people are less likely to become seriously ill.

A drop-off in Covid precautions this winter, combined with the high transmissibility of Omicron, left older people more exposed, scientists said. It is unclear how their own behavior may have changed. An earlier study, from scientists at Marquette University, suggested that while older people in Wisconsin had once been wearing masks at rates higher than those of younger people, that gap had effectively disappeared by mid-2021.

Antiviral pills are now being administered in greater numbers, but it is difficult to know who is benefiting from them. Scientists said that the wintertime spike in Covid death rates among older Americans demanded a more urgent policy response.

Dr. Inouye, of Harvard Medical School, said she had waited for a notice from her mother's assisted living facility about the rollout of second booster shots even as reports started arriving of staff members becoming infected. But still, the facility's director said that a second booster shot drive was impossible without state guidance.

Eventually, her family had to arrange a trip to a pharmacy on their own for a second booster.

"It just seems that now the onus is put completely on the individual," she said. "It's not like it's made easy for you."

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HEADLINE	05/31 Italy lifts Covid requirements for visitors
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/31/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#italy-once-the-pandemics-grim-epicenter-lifts-requirements-for-those-entering-the-country
GIST	<p>ROME — All travelers to Italy will no longer be required to have a valid coronavirus pass as of Wednesday, Italian authorities announced.</p> <p>The country's Health Ministry said the regulation obliging visitors to present a so-called Green Pass — which showed proof of vaccination, recent recovery or a negative test — would expire Tuesday.</p> <p>"I think the conditions exist for a summer without restrictions," Under Secretary of Health Andrea Costa said during a televised interview on Monday.</p> <p>Mr. Costa urged people to "continue to be prudent and have a sense of responsibility" but said pressure on hospitals was low and conditions in the country were "positive."</p>

	<p>Italy was the first country in Europe to be hit hard by the coronavirus, with deaths spiking to more than 800 per day during the first months of the pandemic, according to a New York Times database. The government imposed stringent restrictions in response to the deadly first wave, though deaths surged again late in 2020.</p> <p>Those measures have been gradually lifted as a result of a vaccination campaign that has delivered shots to more than 90 percent of the population over age 12, according to Italy's health minister.</p> <p>A mandate that high-quality N95 masks be worn on public transportation, trains and ferries as well as at indoor cinemas, concerts, theaters and schools is in effect until June 15. Government officials have not said whether that requirement will be extended.</p> <p>"Recent experience has taught us that the summer has always been the easiest moment to manage, because people are outside a lot," the health minister, Roberto Speranza, told reporters in Rome on Tuesday, according to the news agency ANSA. "But we have to remain prepared."</p> <p>Discussions at an international level, "tell us that the game isn't over," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 US: Russia military same mistakes in east
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/us/politics/russia-military-eastern-ukraine.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Russian military, beaten down and demoralized after three months of war, is making the same mistakes in its campaign to capture a swath of eastern Ukraine that forced it to abandon its push to take the entire country, senior American officials say.</p> <p>While Russian troops are capturing territory, a Pentagon official said that their "plodding and incremental" pace was wearing them down, and that the military's overall fighting strength had been diminished by about 20 percent. And since the war started, Russia has lost 1,000 tanks, a senior Pentagon official said last week.</p> <p>President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia appointed a new commander, Gen. Aleksandr V. Dvornikov, in April in what was widely viewed as an acknowledgment that the initial Russian war plan was failing.</p> <p>Soon after his arrival, General Dvornikov tried to get disjointed air and land units to coordinate their attacks, American officials said. But he has not been seen in the past two weeks, leading some officials to speculate as to whether he remains in charge of the war effort.</p> <p>Russian pilots also continue to demonstrate the same risk-averse behavior they did in the early weeks of the war: darting across the border to launch strikes and then quickly returning to Russian territory, instead of staying in Ukrainian air space to deny access to their foes. The result is that Russia still has not established any kind of air superiority, officials said.</p> <p>The Russian military has made some progress in the east, where concentrated firepower and shortened supply lines have helped its forces fight intense battles in recent days. After three bloody months, Russia finally took Mariupol in mid-May, potentially creating a land bridge from the Russian-controlled Crimean Peninsula to the south.</p> <p>As Russia struggles to move forward, Ukraine has also suffered setbacks. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine recently said that as many as 100 Ukrainian servicemen might be dying every day in the fighting. And on Tuesday, Russian troops advanced toward the center of Sievierodonetsk, a city that has become a central focus for the military since it shifted its attention to the east.</p> <p>But some of the areas that Russian forces managed to seize have been quickly contested again, and sometimes retaken, by Ukrainian troops.</p>

Consider Kharkiv. Russia spent six weeks bombarding the eastern city, once home to 1.5 million people, as troops encircled it.

But by May 13, control of the city had flipped again. “The Russians took Kharkiv for a short period of time; the Ukrainians counterattacked and took Kharkiv back,” Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III said at a news conference at the Pentagon last week. “We’ve seen them really proceed at a very slow and unsuccessful pace on the battlefield.”

Ukraine is now pushing Russian troops north and east from Kharkiv, “in some cases all the way back to Russia,” said retired Gen. Philip Breedlove, the former supreme allied commander for Europe. “So now Ukrainians are threatening to cut off Russian lines of supply and pushing their forces to the rear.”

Cutting off Russian supply lines east of Kharkiv would put Russian troops in the same situation they were in after their advance on Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, at the beginning of the war, officials said. Ukrainian units carrying shoulder-fired Javelin antitank missiles picked off Russian soldiers as miles-long Russian convoys near Kyiv stopped moving forward. The invasion stalled, and thousands of Russian troops were killed or injured. Russia then refocused its mission on the east.

In the early weeks of the war, Russia ran its military campaign out of Moscow, with no central war commander on the ground to call the shots, American and other Western officials said. In early April, after Russia’s logistics and morale problems had become clear, Mr. Putin put General Dvornikov in charge of a streamlined war effort.

General Dvornikov arrived with a daunting résumé. He started his career as a platoon commander in 1982 and later fought in Russia’s brutal second war in Chechnya. Moscow also sent him to Syria, where the forces under his command were accused of targeting civilians.

In Ukraine, he established a more streamlined process. Russian pilots began coordinating with troops on the ground toward a similar objective in the eastern region of Donbas, and Russian units were talking to one another about shared goals.

But the invasion is not “proceeding particularly differently in the east than in the west because they haven’t been able to change the character of the Russian army,” said Frederick W. Kagan, a senior fellow and director of the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute. “There are some deep flaws in the Russian army that they could not have repaired in the last few weeks even if they had tried. The flaws are deep and fundamental.”

At the top of that list is the Russian army’s lack of a noncommissioned officers corps empowered to think for itself, Pentagon officials said. American troops have sergeants and platoon leaders and corporals who are given tasks and guidelines and left to accomplish those tasks as they see fit.

But Russia’s military follows a Soviet-style doctrinal method in which troops at the bottom are not empowered to point out flaws in strategy that should be obvious or to make adjustments.

The Ukrainians, after seven years of training alongside troops from the United States and other NATO countries, follow the more Western method and have proved particularly agile at adapting to circumstances, American military officials said.

A two-week fighting pause after the Russian military gave up the fight for Kyiv was not long enough to turn the campaign around, even with a more limited goal, General Breedlove said. General Dvornikov’s “new tactics, resetting the command and control so there was a focused decision maker — all that was right or proper,” he said.

But, General Breedlove added: “Even our army would be hard-pressed to refit, refurbish and reorganize in two weeks after having received such a sound whipping.” When General Dvornikov took control, “the force was thrust back into the battle too quickly. That decision had to have come from Moscow.”

	<p>After renewing an assault on the Donbas, Russia has pounded cities and villages with a barrage of artillery. But troops have not followed that up with any kind of sustained armored invasion, which is necessary if they will hold the territory they are flattening, military officials say. That means that Russia may find itself struggling to hold on to gains — as it did in Kharkiv.</p> <p>Evelyn Farkas, a former senior Pentagon official for Ukraine and Russia in the Obama administration, said Mr. Putin was still too involved in the fight.</p> <p>“We keep hearing accounts of Putin getting more involved,” said Ms. Farkas, who is now executive director of the McCain Institute. “We know that if you have presidents meddling in targeting and operational military decisions, it’s a recipe for disaster.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 China-Russia dealings irk US; no violations
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/chinas-russia-dealings-irk-us-but-dont-breach-sanctions/
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — China’s support for Russia through oil and gas purchases is irking Washington and raising the risk of U.S. retaliation, foreign observers say, though they see no sign Beijing is helping Moscow evade sanctions over its war on Ukraine.</p> <p>Beijing’s importance as a lifeline to Russian President Vladimir Putin rose Monday after the 27-nation European Union, the main market for fossil fuels that supply most of Moscow’s foreign income, agreed to stop oil purchases.</p> <p>President Xi Jinping’s government declared ahead of Russia’s Feb. 24 attack that it had a “no limits” friendship with Moscow and has kept the West guessing about whether it might bail Putin out.</p> <p>China rejects the sanctions as illegal because the United States, Europe and Japan cut off Russia from their markets and the global banking system without working through the United Nations, where Beijing and Moscow have veto power.</p> <p>The sanctions don’t prohibit China, India or other countries from buying Russian oil and gas. But President Joe Biden has warned Xi of unspecified consequences if Beijing helps Moscow evade sanctions. That leaves open the risk Chinese companies might be punished by losing access to valuable Western markets.</p> <p>Beijing appears to be complying. But state-owned companies are buying more Russian oil and gas, which gives the Kremlin export income. They also are potential investors in Russian energy projects as Western companies leave.</p> <p>“The Biden administration will likely become increasingly exasperated at China’s continued support for Russia,” Neil Thomas of Eurasia Group said in an email.</p> <p>That increases the likelihood of “unilateral moves to punish Beijing” and “allied coordination on economic security measures aimed at countering China,” Thomas said.</p> <p>The conflict adds to tension with Washington over Taiwan, Hong Kong, human rights, trade, technology and Beijing’s strategic ambitions.</p> <p>China poses the “most serious long-term challenge to the international order,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a May 26 speech.</p> <p>Xi’s government has tried to distance itself from Putin’s war by calling for peace talks, but it avoids criticizing Moscow.</p>

Other governments “must not harm China’s legitimate interests in any way” in dealing with Ukraine, warned a foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian.

Monday’s decision by EU leaders will cut imports of Russian oil by 90%, according to the head of its executive branch, Ursula von der Leyen. European customers have been paying Russia as much as \$1 billion per day for oil, gas and coal.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, responded on Twitter: “Russia will find other importers.”

Moscow is tiny as a trading partner for Beijing but an ally against what both resent as U.S. dominance in global affairs.

China sees Russian oil and gas as a way to diversify supplies for its energy-hungry economy. China bought 20% of last year’s Russian crude exports, according to the International Energy Agency. The two sides announced a new 30-year gas contract on Feb. 4, three weeks ahead of Moscow’s attack on Ukraine, that the state newspaper Global Times said will increase annual supplies to China by about 25%.

While the two are friendly, China is taking advantage of the situation to get cheaper energy and favorable business deals, said Maria Shagina of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

“They would always capitalize on Russia’s isolation,” said Shagina. “But they would be very cautious not to violate sanctions outright.”

On May 24, while Biden was visiting Tokyo, Russian and Chinese warplanes carried out “strategic air patrols” above the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea and the western Pacific. The Japanese government said bombers flew near Japan.

Biden warned Xi during a March 18 video meeting not to give Moscow military or economic aid.

Biden’s national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said in March that Washington wouldn’t tolerate China or any other country helping Moscow work around sanctions. The White House has criticized Beijing’s “rhetorical support” for Putin.

Washington is “monitoring closely” Chinese dealings with Moscow, the American Embassy said in a written response to questions.

“We have not seen the provision of military equipment,” it said. Asked about economic sanctions and possible violations, the embassy said it had nothing further.

After BP and ExxonMobil announced they were pulling out of Russian oil and gas projects, “there are rumors state-owned Chinese companies might step in and acquire stakes,” said Shagina.

China’s imports from Russia rose 56.6% over a year earlier in April to \$8.9 billion, according to customs data. That helped Putin’s government record a current account surplus, the broadest measure of trade, of \$96 billion for the four months ending in April.

Washington also is frustrated that India, the No. 3 global oil importer, is buying more from Russia to take advantage of low prices. The Biden administration is lobbying Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government to stop.

In March, the U.S. government told Asian and European allies that American intelligence had determined China indicated to Russia it would be willing to provide military support for the campaign in Ukraine and financial help to limit the impact of sanctions.

Russia has been expelled from the global SWIFT network for bank transfers.

	<p>China's credit card processor, UnionPay, refused to work with Russian banks after Visa and MasterCard stopped serving them, the Russian news outlet RBC reported in April. It said UnionPay worried it might be hit by "secondary sanctions" and cut off from the Western-controlled global financial system.</p> <p>China has blocked Russia's airlines from flying foreign-owned aircraft into Chinese airspace, the Russian news outlet RBK reported. Putin in March threw ownership of the planes into doubt by allowing them to be-registered in Russia to avoid being seized after the European leasing companies were barred from doing business with Russian carriers.</p> <p>The Civil Aviation Administration of China didn't immediately respond to a request for confirmation and details.</p> <p>China gave Moscow an economic lifeline following Western sanctions imposed over its 2014 seizure of Crimea from Ukraine.</p> <p>Beijing agreed to buy Russian gas in a deal estimated to be worth up to \$400 billion over three decades. Moscow turned to Chinese state-owned companies to help pay for oil and gas development after Crimea-related sanctions cut off Western financing.</p> <p>"The help will never come for free," Shagina said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 In Mali, a massacre with Russian footprint
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/world/africa/mali-massacre-investigation.html
GIST	<p>BAMAKO, Mali — On the last Sunday in March before Ramadan, thousands of merchants and villagers filled the market of Moura, in central Mali, trading cattle in a vast pen and stocking up on spices and vegetables in the town's sandy alleys.</p> <p>Suddenly, five low-flying helicopters thrummed overhead, some firing weapons and drawing gunfire in return. Villagers ran for their lives. But there was nowhere to escape: The helicopters were dropping soldiers on the town's outskirts to block all the exits.</p> <p>The soldiers were in pursuit of Islamist militants who have been operating in the region for years. Many of the soldiers were Malians, but they were accompanied by white foreigners wearing military fatigues and speaking a language that was neither English nor French, locals said.</p> <p>The foreigners, according to diplomats, officials and human rights groups, belonged to the Russian paramilitary group known as Wagner.</p> <p>Over the next five days in Moura, Malian soldiers and their Russian allies looted houses, held villagers captive in a dried-out riverbed and executed hundreds of men, according to eight witnesses from Moura and more than 20 Malian politicians and civil society activists, as well as Western military officials and diplomats.</p> <p>Both Malian soldiers and foreign mercenaries killed captives at close range, often without interrogating them, based on their ethnicity or clothes, according to witnesses. The foreigners marauded through the town, indiscriminately killing people in houses, stealing jewelry and confiscating cellphones to eliminate any visual evidence.</p> <p>However, using satellite imagery, The New York Times identified the sites of at least two mass graves, which matched the witnesses' descriptions of where captives were executed and buried.</p> <p>The Malian authorities and military did not respond to multiple requests for comment.</p>

Mali has been fighting armed militants for the past decade, initially with the help of French and later European forces. But as the relationship has deteriorated between France and the Malian military junta, which seized power last year, French forces are withdrawing from Mali, and the Wagner Group has moved in — a step denounced by 15 European countries and Canada, as well as the United States.

The Wagner Group refers to a network of operatives and companies that serves as what the U.S. Treasury Department has called a “proxy force” of Russia’s Ministry of Defense. Analysts describe the group as an extension of Russia’s foreign policy through deniable activities, including the use of mercenaries and disinformation campaigns.

Since it appeared in Ukraine in 2014, its operatives have been identified working in Libya, Syria and countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including the Central African Republic, Mozambique, Sudan and now Mali. They ally with embattled political and military leaders who can pay for their services in cash or with lucrative mining concessions for precious minerals like gold, diamonds and uranium, according to interviews conducted in recent weeks with dozens of analysts, diplomats and military officials in Africa and Western countries.

Malian authorities hailed the Moura attack as a major victory in their fight against extremist groups, claiming to have killed 203 fighters and arrested more than 50 others, but making no mention of civilian casualties. They have denied the presence of Wagner operatives, saying only that they have a contract with Russia to provide “instructors.”

However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in May on Italian television that Wagner was present in Mali “on a commercial basis,” providing “security services.”

Witnesses and analysts say the death toll in Moura was between 300 and 400 by their most conservative estimates, with most of the victims civilians.

“From Monday to Thursday, the killings didn’t stop,” said Hamadoun, a tailor working near the market when the helicopters arrived. “The whites and the Malians killed together.”

Bara, a cattle trader from Moura, said, “They terminated all the youth of this area.”

The witnesses, fearing retribution, spoke to the Times on condition that they be identified only by their first names. They were interviewed after fleeing Moura and taking refuge elsewhere in Mali.

The death toll in Moura is the highest in a growing list of human rights abuses committed by the Malian military, which diplomats and Malian human rights observers say have increased since the military began conducting joint operations with the Wagner Group in January.

In central Mali, nearly 500 civilians have been killed in the joint operations, including in Moura, according to confidential reports from the U.N. mission in Mali seen by the Times and a database compiled by Hédi Nsaibia, a senior researcher at the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project, or ACLED. Some abuses could amount to crimes against humanity, the U.N. said in one report.

On Monday, the U.N. mission said human rights violations committed by the Malian military against civilians had increased tenfold between the end of 2021 and the first quarter of this year. In Moura, the security forces “may have also raped, looted, arrested and arbitrarily detained many civilians,” according to the mission, which is preparing a report on the incident.

Militaries in the Sahel, the vast sub-Saharan region that cuts across Africa, have long been accused of killing their own people — including after training by Western instructors. But the particular human rights violations in Mali fit a pattern of abuses — including torture, beatings and summary executions — reported in other countries where Wagner mercenaries have been deployed.

The Wagner Group is believed to be led by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian oligarch with close ties to President Vladimir Putin. In a written response to questions sent by the Times, Prigozhin praised Mali's current leader, its military and its actions in Moura. But he denied the presence of Wagner contractors in Mali, calling it "a legend" that the group even exists.

He added, "Wherever there are Russian contractors, real or fictional, they never violate human rights."

In December, the European Union imposed sanctions on eight people, though not Prigozhin, connected to the group, accusing it of looting natural resources, fueling violence and violating international law.

In Mali, about 1,000 Wagner mercenaries have been deployed to at least 15 military bases, security outposts and checkpoints, including former French bases and facilities funded by the European Union, according to a French military official and a senior diplomat based in Mali.

Sorcha MacLeod, chair of the U.N. working group on the use of mercenaries, said human rights abuses and war crimes increased wherever mercenaries were deployed. "They have no incentive to end the conflict, because they are financially motivated," she said.

A slow-motion massacre

A hard-to-reach town of mud brick buildings in the flood plain of the Inner Niger Delta, Moura is known for its "galbal," or livestock market, which draws thousands of buyers and merchants every Sunday.

The region is home to many herders and farmers of the Fulani ethnic group, who are prime recruits for the militants and often victims of the violence too.

Since 2015, the Katibat Macina, a local affiliate of the terrorist group al-Qaida, has had a grip on the area, collecting taxes and forcing men to grow their beards.

"They are the government in the region," said Hamadou, a herder who was held by the soldiers.

On the day of the attack, armed Islamist militants were roaming Moura, their motorcycles parked nearby. When the helicopters approached the town, some villagers climbed on the roofs their houses to see what was happening. Some militants tried to flee on motorcycles, while others fired at the helicopters.

Malian soldiers rounded up captives and held them under guard at two sites: an area southwest of the town, not far from the galbal, and a dried riverbed east of the town, the villagers said in interviews.

The mass executions began on the Monday, and the victims were both civilians and unarmed militants, witnesses said. Soldiers picked out up to 15 people at a time, inspected their fingers and shoulders for the imprint left by regular use of weapons, and executed men yards away from captives.

Meanwhile, Russian mercenaries chased people in the streets and broke into houses. "The white soldiers were killing anyone trying to flee," said Bara, the cattle trader, who was taken to the riverbed.

On Tuesday, Malian soldiers used the mosque's loudspeakers to order everyone still hiding in houses to get out. Russian mercenaries made sure they did.

Modi, a 24-year-old resident, said two white men with guns shot through the door of his house, narrowly missing him. He ran to the riverbed, hoping he would be safer with the Malian soldiers.

When Hamadou, the herder, left his house Tuesday, he said he discovered "cadavers everywhere."

With the stench becoming unbearable, soldiers ordered those who had wheeled carts to collect bodies, and others to collect dry grass. The soldiers doused some of the bodies with fuel and set them on fire, in full view of the captives.

More interrogations followed Wednesday, which women and children were ordered to witness. Soldiers pushed captives wearing the short pants or boots that could affiliate them with militants to walk around a house which they said contained a machine that could identify jihadis, eyewitnesses said, noting that this was likely a bluff. The soldiers executed a few men and forced others into helicopters.

The soldiers and their Russian allies left Thursday after killing six last prisoners in retaliation for four who had escaped. A Malian soldier told a group of captives that the soldiers had killed “all the bad people,” said Hamadou.

The soldier apologized for the good people who “died by accident.”

All of the victims were Fulani, according to the survivors and testimonies collected by Human Rights Watch. Corinne Dukfa, the group’s Sahel director, said this would likely push more Fulani into the arms of Islamist groups.

Deadly joint operations

Since the military began conducting joint operations with Wagner mercenaries, “the distinction between civilians and fighters” — already barely respected — has “completely disappeared,” said Ousmane Diallo, a West Africa researcher with Amnesty International.

In early March, 30 charred bodies were discovered near the military base of Diabaly, where Malian soldiers and Wagner operatives have been deployed, weeks after a similarly sized group of men was abducted, according to U.N. peacekeepers in Mali and the French military.

In early April, Malian security forces and Russian mercenaries executed seven young children near the town of Bandiagara, according to the French military. In mid-April, the Malian military said it killed 18 Islamist militants and rounded up hundreds of others at a livestock market in the town of Hombori. But among those injured and taken to a clinic were older people, women and children, according to witnesses. At least one of those killed was also a civilian.

Investigators from the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali have so far been denied access to Moura. Russia and China blocked a vote at the U.N. Security Council on an independent investigation.

Some Malians in these regions are losing trust in the government.

“We thought the white soldiers would free us from jihadists, but they are more dangerous,” said Oumar, who said his brother was among the 18 victims in Hombori. “At least jihadists don’t fire at anyone moving.”

Ten days after the siege ended, two government ministers brought food and donations to Moura, claiming that the army had brought peace and security. On Malian television, local officials praised the military operation.

Soon after, the militants returned and kidnapped the deputy mayor. He has not been heard from since.

As villagers were at worship one evening in late April, said Bara, the trader, three militants arrived and announced that anyone who valued their lives should leave the village before 6 a.m. the next day. It has since emptied out.

“We had a home,” Bara said, “but we’re now strangers in our own country.”

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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/yan-gon-bombing-spurs-accusations-myanmar-govt-foes-85102648
GIST	<p>BANGKOK -- Myanmar's military government and its opponents traded accusations over a bomb that exploded Tuesday in the middle of the country's largest city, Yangon, killing one and wounding nine others.</p> <p>Photos and videos of Tuesday's bombing that circulated on social media showing the bloodied victims sprawled on the sidewalk were a sharp reminder of the violence that has engulfed the country since the military seized power last year.</p> <p>A story in Wednesday's edition of The Global New Light of Myanmar, a state-run newspaper, blamed the People's Defense Forces, the opposition movement's armed wing, but did not supply any evidence linking them to the blast.</p> <p>It said the attack was made with a "handmade bomb planted by PDF terrorists at a bus stop" roughly one block from the Sule Pagoda, a city landmark. The blast occurred at 3:20 p.m. and a 30-year-old man died of wounds in his chest and abdomen, state media said.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the self-styled National Unity Government, the main opposition body that loosely commands the PDF and its various local units, pinned the blame on the military government.</p> <p>"The brutal genocidal military has been carrying out senseless bombings and killings against its own civilian population across Myanmar," said a statement by Sasa, the NUG's Minister of International Cooperation.</p> <p>Myanmar has been in turmoil since last year's army takeover seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking widespread nonviolent protests that were quashed with lethal force by the army and police. In turn, opponents of military rule took up arms and are now conducting an active insurgency in many parts of the country.</p> <p>The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners says 1,876 civilians, mostly in cities and towns, have been killed by the security forces. Their figures do not generally include casualties of war in the countryside.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the international human rights organization Amnesty International accused Myanmar's military of carrying out widespread atrocities in the eastern part of the country that constitute war crimes and probably crimes against humanity.</p> <p>It charges in a report that civilians from the Karen and Karenni ethnic minorities have been the targets of unlawful killing, arbitrary detention and forcible displacement.</p> <p>"The world's attention may have moved away from Myanmar since last year's coup, but civilians continue to pay a high price," Rawya Rageh, Amnesty's senior crisis adviser, said in a news release.</p> <p>The opposition NUG's Defense Ministry in a Wednesday statement said the ruling military "have sought to place blame on ethnic resistance groups and revolutionary forces in similar incidents in the past."</p> <p>Urban guerrillas are part of the resistance movement, carrying out targeted killings of people associated with the military and bombings of establishments with official ties. But PDF-affiliated groups in Yangon posted statements on their Facebook pages denying involvement in Tuesday's blast and accusing the military of staging a provocation.</p> <p>The military government brands its opponents as terrorists in a bid to dent their widespread popularity. Wednesday's newspaper report said the PDF received "financial assistance to launch bombing attacks."</p>

	<p>“They also committed bomb attacks using handmade bombs on public roads, streets, bus terminals and bus stops,” it added.</p> <p>Another fatal bombing occurred Tuesday at an education office in Naung Cho township in Shan State in eastern Myanmar, for which state media likewise blamed the PDF and the NUG.</p> <p>The Global New Light of Myanmar said a headmistress died and six educational personnel and a civil servant were injured. The blast occurred as state schools were preparing for their seasonal reopening.</p> <p>The school system has been a battleground between the military government and its foes, who generally have pressed for a boycott as a sign of rejection of army rule.</p> <p>The non-governmental organization Save the Children said in a statement issued Wednesday that there were at least 260 attacks on schools between May 2021 and April this year, and that explosions in and around school buildings accounted for almost three-quarters of that total.</p> <p>“Attacks on schools, teachers, and students have surged over the past year due to the conflict, leaving many of them scared to return to the classroom and, in some cases, with no schools left to attend,” the group said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Russia cutting natural gas from Denmark
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-cutting-off-natural-gas-denmark-company-85103549
GIST	<p>COPENHAGEN, Denmark -- Denmark’s largest energy company said Russia is cutting off its gas supply as of Wednesday because it refused to pay in rubles, the latest escalation over European energy amid the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Russia previously halted natural gas supplies to Finland, Poland and Bulgaria for refusing a demand to pay in rubles. And on Tuesday, the tap was turned off to the Netherlands.</p> <p>Danish energy company Ørsted said it still expected to be able to serve its customers.</p> <p>“We stand firm in our refusal to pay in rubles, and we’ve been preparing for this scenario,” Ørsted CEO Mads Nipper said. “The situation underpins the need of the EU becoming independent of Russian gas by accelerating the build-out of renewable energy.”</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin declared in the wake of Western sanctions that “unfriendly foreign buyers” needed to open two accounts with state-owned Gazprombank, one to pay in euros and dollars as specified in contracts and another in rubles.</p> <p>The Danish Energy Agency said that in the first 18 weeks of 2022, Russian gas amounted to approximately 25% of EU gas consumption. The agency said that Denmark losing its supply would not have immediate consequences</p> <p>“We still have gas in Denmark, and consumers can still have gas delivered,” Kristoffer Böttzauw, head of the Danish Energy Agency. said in a statement Monday. “But we have plans ready if the situation worsens.”</p> <p>Since there is no pipeline going directly from Russia to Denmark, Russia will not be able to directly cut off gas supplies to Denmark, which still will be able to get it, Ørsted said. Russia's move means that Denmark must purchase more gas on the European gas market, the company added.</p> <p>Denmark has been a net exporter of natural gas for many years, but because its Tyra field in the North Sea is being renovated, the country currently imports about 75% of its gas consumption via Germany. The Tyra field is expected to reopen in mid-2023.</p>

	<p>In Denmark, some 380,000 households use natural gas for heating via gas boilers, the agency said.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the leaders of the European Union agreed to cut around 90% of all Russian oil imports over the next six months. The 27-nation bloc has relied on Russia for 25% of its crude and 40% of its natural gas.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 China bars Russian airlines foreign planes
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-china-bars-russian-airlines-foreign-planes-85102398
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China has barred Russia's airlines from flying foreign-owned jetliners into its airspace, the Russian news outlet RBK reported, after President Vladimir Putin threw the aircrafts' ownership into doubt by allowing them to be re-registered in Russia to avoid seizure under sanctions over Moscow's attack on Ukraine.</p> <p>The European Union, home to major aircraft leasing companies, banned the sale or lease of aircraft to Russian carriers in February. Putin responded by approving the re-registration measure in March, which prompted suggestions foreign owners may never recover planes worth billions of dollars.</p> <p>China's air regulator asked all foreign carriers last month to update ownership information and other details, RBK said, citing two unidentified sources. It said Russian airlines that couldn't provide documents showing their aircraft were "de-registered abroad" were barred from Chinese airspace.</p> <p>The Civil Aviation Administration of China didn't immediately respond to a request for confirmation and details of the decision.</p> <p>President Xi Jinping's government said in February it has a "no limits" friendship with Moscow but has tried to distance itself from Putin's war. Beijing has criticized Western sanctions but appears to be avoiding steps that might be seen as helping Moscow for fear of possible penalties against Chinese companies.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Italy imports more Russian oil
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/italy-imports-russian-oil-impending-embargo-85103367
GIST	<p>MILAN -- Even as the European Union decided to reduce Russian crude oil imports by 90% by the end of the year, Italy has become the only country in Europe to increase them, an unintended consequence of EU sanctions against Russia.</p> <p>Meant to punish Russia for invading Ukraine, the EU oil embargo is now putting at risk one of Italy's largest refineries, located in Sicily, which would deal an economic blow to the depressed region's economy.</p> <p>Italy agreed with its EU partners to cut Russian crude imports by 2023, a move that Premier Mario Draghi called "a complete success," that "just a couple of days ago wouldn't have been believable."</p> <p>But Rome also has to deal with the fate of the refinery in Sicily owned by Russia's Lukoil. As a result of previous sanctions against Russia, ISAB Srl has paradoxically gone from processing 15% of Russian crude to 100%.</p> <p>That's because banks have refused to take the risk of extending credit to Russia-controlled ISAB that would allow it to buy oil from non-Russian sources, even if not specifically barred from doing so, said Matteo Villa, an energy analyst at the ISPI think tank in Milan.</p> <p>Ships continue to arrive at the port-side refinery with crude oil from the Russian parent company.</p>

Italy in May received about 400,000 barrels of Russian oil a day in May, four times the pre-invasion levels, according to the Kpler commodity data company. Of that total, ISAB received 220,000 barrels a day from Russia.

“Italy is the only country in Europe increasing oil imports,” Villa said, going from the sixth-largest importer of Russian oil to the largest in the three months since the invasion.

The plant employs 3,500 people at three production sites, including a refinery, gasification and electricity cogeneration plant, in Sicily's Syracuse province, and risks closure if a solution isn't found before the embargo kicks in. The plant and related activities generate half of the provincial gross domestic product and 8% of the region's economic activity, processing one-fifth of Italy's crude oil imports.

The refinery's future was already at risk in the longer term, due to Italy's energy transition to more sustainable sources. The embargo has only increased the sense of urgency to find a solution.

“The mood today is even worse than yesterday,” said Fiorenzo Amato, the secretary general of the Filctem Cgil union in Syracuse. “The industrial hub ... employs many people, giving families the chance to live.”

Since learning of the embargo, refinery workers are growing more concerned about their future.

“It will be a disaster,” said Marco Candelargiu. “We hope they find a solution. You cannot destroy a province. The choice was made a long time ago to base the economy prevalently on the refinery.”

Villa said one solution would be for Italy to temporarily nationalize the refinery, a move permitted for energy emergencies under Italy's Constitution, but a week of discussions has yielded no agreement.

As an Italian-owned refinery, ISAB would be able to get the necessary financing to purchase crude from other sources and keep operating while longer-term solutions are sought.

“This is important for employment in Sicily, for the provisioning of gasoline and diesel to Italy and for our own political face-saving in Europe,” Villa said.

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HEADLINE	06/01 Germany: anti-air missiles, radar systems
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/germany-send-kyiv-anti-aircraft-missiles-radar-systems-85103717
GIST	<p>BERLIN -- German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Wednesday that his country will supply Ukraine with modern anti-aircraft missiles and radar systems, stepping up arms deliveries amid criticism that Germany isn't doing enough to help Kyiv fend off Russia.</p> <p>Scholz told lawmakers that the government has decided to provide Ukraine with IRIS-T missiles developed by Germany together with other NATO nations.</p> <p>He said Germany will also supply Ukraine with radar systems to help locate enemy artillery.</p> <p>The announcement comes as Ukrainian forces are engaged in a grinding battle for the eastern industrial region of the Donbas. Following a series of setbacks in the weeks after their invasion, Russian troops switched their focus to the Donbas and are bent on capturing the parts of the region not already controlled by Moscow-backed separatists.</p> <p>In the Donbas, Russian forces have seized half of a key eastern Ukrainian city in a “frenzied push,” the Mayor Oleksandr Striuk said Tuesday. Serhiy Haidai, governor of the larger Luhansk region, meanwhile, said that most of the city, Sievierodonetsk, was under Russian control, though he added that fierce fighting continued and the city wasn't surrounded.</p>

Military analysts have said the battles in the Donbas are a race against time: The Kremlin is hoping for a victory before more Western arms arrive to bolster Ukraine's defenses.

The West is hoping to tilt the balance. President Joe Biden said Tuesday the U.S. will provide Ukraine with the more advanced rocket systems that its leaders have asked for. In an essay published in The New York Times, Biden said the rocket systems will enable Ukraine "to more precisely strike key targets."

U.S. officials, speaking before Biden's announcement on condition of anonymity, said Washington will send Ukraine a small number of high-tech, medium-range rocket systems. The rockets could be used both to intercept Russian artillery and to take out Russian positions in towns where fighting is intense, such as Sievierodonetsk.

The announcements come amid claims at home and abroad that Germany has been slow to provide Ukraine with the weapons it needs to defend itself against Russia.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Hurricane Agatha kills 11, leaves 20 missing
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hurricane-agatha-kills-11-leaves-20-missing-south-85101850
GIST	<p>SAN ISIDRO DEL PALMAR, Mexico -- Hurricane Agatha caused flooding and mudslides that killed at least 11 people and left 20 missing, the governor of the southern state of Oaxaca said Tuesday.</p> <p>Gov. Alejandro Murat said rivers overflowed their banks and swept away people in homes, while other victims were buried under mud and rocks.</p> <p>"There were fundamentally two reasons" for the deaths, Murat told local media. "There were rivers that overflowed, and on the other hand, and the most serious part, were landslides."</p> <p>Murat said the deaths appeared to be concentrated in a number of small towns in the mountains, just inland from the coast. But he said there were also reports of three children missing near the resort of Huatulco.</p> <p>Agatha made history as the strongest hurricane ever recorded to come ashore in May during the eastern Pacific hurricane season.</p> <p>It made landfall Monday afternoon on a sparsely populated stretch of small beach towns and fishing villages in Oaxaca.</p> <p>It was a strong Category 2 hurricane, with maximum sustained winds of 105 mph, but it quickly lost power moving inland over the mountainous interior. Remnants of Agatha were moving northeast Tuesday into Veracruz state.</p> <p>Murat said power had been restored to some communities near the coast, but that some bridges had been washed out and mudslides blocked a number of highways.</p> <p>San Isidro del Palmar, only a couple miles inland from the coast, was swamped by the Tonameca river that flows through town.</p> <p>Residents waded through neck-deep water to salvage what items they could from their homes, walking gingerly with piles of clothing atop their heads and religious figures in their arms.</p> <p>Argeo Aquino, who has lived in the town his whole life, said he could recall only two other occasions when he saw such flooding.</p>

	<p>“The houses are totally flooded, so they are getting everything out,” Aquino said Monday as he watched his neighbors. “There are stores, houses. More than anything else, we have to try to save all the good material, because everything else is going to be washed away.”</p> <p>The Tonameca's brown waters reached the windows of parked cars and the minibuses used for local transportation.</p> <p>Nearby, heavy rain and high winds lashed the beach town of Zipolite, known for its clothing-optional beach and bohemian vibe. The wind howled for about six hours on Monday, aid Silvia Ranfagni, manager of the Casa Kalmar hotel in Zipolite.</p> <p>“The sound of the wind was really loud, high-pitched,” said Ranfagni. “It started at 1 p.m. when the telephone coverage went out and it didn't calm down until 7:30.”</p> <p>“A lot of trees were down, roads washed out,” she said. “A lot of metal and thatched roofs were blown off.”</p> <p>Agatha formed on Sunday and quickly gained power. It was the strongest hurricane on record to make landfall in May in the eastern Pacific, said Jeff Masters, meteorologist with Yale Climate Connections and the founder of Weather Underground.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Impact of Russia blockade of Black Sea
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/russias-blockade-odesa/story?id=85083666
GIST	<p>ODESA, Ukraine -- Russia's invasion of Ukraine has meant vital food exports are stuck in Ukraine's ports. ABC News foreign correspondent Tom Soufi Burrige explains a looming crisis by answering four key questions.</p> <p>1. How important is Ukraine's food production for the world? Ukraine is a vast agricultural production house.</p> <p>The country produces 46% of the world's sunflower oil exports, 37% of global millet (a small grain cereal) exports, 13% of all barley exports, 10% of total wheat exports, 8% of honey and 7% of walnut exports, according to the Ukrainian Agribusiness Club.</p> <p>Before Russia invaded, most of Ukraine's food production was exported through the country's Black Sea ports.</p> <p>Earlier this month, the United Nations World Food Programme said those exports would normally feed 400 million people around the world.</p> <p>The Middle East and Africa are Ukraine's main food export markets, said Professor Oleg Nivievskyi from Kyiv's School of Economics.</p> <p>By gaining rare access inside a grain terminal in Odesa's port, ABC News was able to witness the vast infrastructure that would normally be used to ship the produce out.</p> <p>Pre-war, the terminal would receive a hundred truck loads and a hundred train wagons of grain in a single day, said Oleksandr Guzenko, the plant's chief engineer.</p> <p>In a single hour, 400 tons of grain would normally flow through the plant and out to ships waiting in the dock, Guzenko added.</p> <p>However, these are abnormal times.</p>

2. What is the impact of the Russia's blockade of the Black Sea?

The grain terminal at the Port of Odesa is depressingly idle and silent. Chief Engineer Oleksandr Guzenko told ABC News he felt "helpless."

The Russian threat at sea means there is no safe route for commercial vessels to exit and vast quantities of food exports are stuck in Ukraine's Black Sea ports.

It is becoming "a disaster" for Ukrainian farmers.

"If the ports don't open soon, we are stuck with the crops," said Kees Huizinga, who owns a 40,000-acre farm in Kyshchentsi in the Cherkasy region, south of Kyiv.

His business would gradually run out of money, he told ABC News, and planting for next year's harvest is already at risk.

Huizinga predicted the world's food supply could be "disrupted for the coming decade" if the situation isn't solved soon.

However, the blockade is having a ripple effect far beyond Ukraine.

The U.N.'s World Food Programme said global food prices have risen sharply since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and vulnerable communities in parts of East Africa are at risk.

Even before Russia attacked Ukraine, the WFP was forecasting a year of "catastrophic hunger," because global resources were not keeping pace with demand.

In the first month of the war, export prices for wheat and maize rose by 22% and 20%, respectively, "on top of steep rises in 2021," according to the WFP.

WFP Executive Director David Beasley told ABC News the war is a "catastrophe on top of a catastrophe."

"The world demands [that the ports open], because hundreds of millions of people globally depend on food that comes through these ports," Beasley said.

3. What is causing the blockade?

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his generals have spoken openly about their desire to capture Ukraine's largest port, Odesa, and possibly the entire Ukrainian coastline -- which would throttle Ukraine's economy.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in late February, there was a possibility that the Russian navy might launch an assault on Ukraine's southwestern coast from the sea.

By capturing Snake Island, a strategically important slice of dry land off Ukraine's western coast, on day one of the war, the Kremlin signaled its intent.

In response to the Russian threat, Ukraine quickly placed mines in the Black Sea near Odesa and other major ports.

In a briefing with ABC News this week, a NATO official said coastal defenses were necessary "in order to deter or thwart a potential Russian amphibious landing."

The Russian government recently said it was ready to provide a humanitarian corridor for ships carrying food, in return for the lifting of Western sanctions. It called on Ukraine to de-mine the Black Sea.

However, the U.K. Ministry of Defense accused Russia of "introducing an alternative narrative" to complicate people's understanding of the original cause of the blockade.

Ukraine has only deployed maritime mines, the U.K.'s Ministry of Defense said, "because of the continued credible threat of Russian amphibious assaults from the Black Sea."

4. Why do Western leaders accuse Putin of "weaponizing hunger" and is there a solution on the horizon?

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently accused Putin of "using food as a weapon."

The Biden administration and its Western allies make this accusation because Russia's invasion of Ukraine was unprovoked and the Kremlin has the ability to drop its threat on ports such as Odesa.

"If Kyiv solves the problem of de-mining ports, then the Russian navy will ensure unhindered passage of ships with grain to the Mediterranean Sea," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov responded on Tuesday to international criticism.

The White House has already ruled out meeting Russia's demand to drop sanctions in return for an end to the blockade.

What military guarantees Russia could offer Ukraine, in order for Ukraine to demine the Black Sea, is not at all clear.

A senior NATO official offered a blunt assessment to ABC News in the context of Tuesday's back and forth: Ukraine cannot trust anything Russia says.

That said, European countries, namely France and Germany, are negotiating the issue with Russia.

In the meantime, Ukraine and the European Union are trying to increase Ukrainian food exports by road and rail. However, Nivievskyi, from Kyiv's School of Economics, warned it is "not physically possible" to transport the huge amount of grain by rail and road.

By his calculation, rail and road routes have only about 10% of the export capacity of Ukraine's Black Sea ports.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle home prices continue to surge
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/u-s-home-prices-continued-to-surge-in-march-when-will-the-slowdown-come/
GIST	<p>Home-price growth in 20 U.S. cities picked up for the fourth straight month with Tampa, Florida, showing the biggest gains.</p> <p>A measure of prices in those 20 cities, including the Seattle area, climbed 21.2% through March following a 20.3% gain in February, the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller index showed Tuesday.</p> <p>All 20 cities reported double-digit price increases for the year ended in March, and prices in Tampa jumped 34.8%, according to a statement.</p> <p>In the Seattle area, prices were up 27.7% year-over-year, the seventh biggest leap of the 20 cities. Seattle prices increased 5.6% from February to March, the region's biggest month-to-month jump since the index began tracking Seattle in 1990.</p> <p>Even so, since March, the local housing market has begun to cool down as interest rates climb. The Case-Shiller index lags by two months and reflects single-family home sales in parts of King, Snohomish and Pierce counties.</p>

	<p>“Those of us who have been anticipating a deceleration in the growth rate of U.S. home prices will have to wait at least a month longer,” Craig Lazzara, a managing director at S&P Dow Jones Indices, said in the statement.</p> <p>Homebuyers are facing a worsening affordability situation with mortgage rates hovering around the highest levels in more than a decade. Further price appreciation threatens to add to the pain even as higher rates and economic uncertainty have started to soften the market slightly. Redfin Corp. said earlier this month that the number of sellers cutting prices hit the highest level since October 2019.</p> <p>Nationally, prices rallied 20.6%, but S&P Dow Jones Indices’ Lazzara warned that a deceleration could be on the horizon.</p> <p>“Mortgages are becoming more expensive as the Federal Reserve has begun to ratchet up interest rates, suggesting that the macroeconomic environment may not support extraordinary home-price growth for much longer,” Lazzara said. “Although one can safely predict that price gains will begin to decelerate, the timing of the deceleration is a more difficult call.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Preschools expand? Struggle find teachers
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/education/lab/wa-preschools-could-expand-but-they-are-struggling-to-find-teachers/
GIST	<p>Washington’s state-funded preschool program is one of only a handful in the country that increased available slots during the pandemic. But there’s a difference between having the funding to help a child and actually being able to do it.</p> <p>Thousands of the state’s most in-need families are struggling to get their children into an early learning program, and a big part of the problem is the same thing hitting everything from airlines to restaurants — a lack of available workers.</p> <p>Some providers aren’t operating at full capacity despite having plenty of interest, while others, like the Denise Louie Education Center in Seattle’s Chinatown International District, rely on staff who don’t normally work inside preschool classrooms to keep things going.</p> <p>“We juggle staff from program to program, site to site,” executive director Susan Yang said.</p> <p>The education center has reduced the number of children in some classrooms to maintain its student-to-staff ratios. Other providers have closed entire classrooms at a time, sometimes several.</p> <p>The state’s Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, or ECEAP, serves families with children between 3 and 5 years old who have special education needs, are in foster care or receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grants. Data shows ECEAP, combined with Washington’s new Transitional Kindergarten program, grew overall capacity during the pandemic, providing funding for 1,505 new seats in the 2020-21 school year, climbing to just over 15,000 available slots statewide.</p> <p>But the unique number of children served through ECEAP and the federally funded Head Start program — which provides support to families with children up to 5 years old — tell a different story.</p> <p>The Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP indicates 29% fewer students were served through Head Start during the pandemic: 12,255 in 2021 compared with 17,242 in 2019. At the same time, 2,391 fewer students enrolled in ECEAP. Those numbers have picked back up this year, with 15,354 unique children enrolled, but that’s still lower than pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>Part of this decline could be explained by parents staying home with their children, but Joel Ryan, the state association’s executive director, also said staff shortages are driving the decrease in the number of children served.</p>

He blames it on an economy transformed by the pandemic, an increasingly demanding workload for teachers, but mostly, on a chronic underfunding of early learning.

“We’re just not doing what we need to do to make sure all kids have a successful life,” he said, “and that of course starts with their caregivers.”

Early educators with a bachelor’s degree are paid nearly 22% less than K-8 teachers, and the poverty rate among early learning teachers in Washington is around 18%, according to a 2020 report from the University of California, Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

That’s compared to a poverty rate of only about 8% among Washington’s overall workforce, and a poverty rate of a little more than 2% among the state’s K-8 teachers.

Add on the training and degree requirements, and Yang said it’s a hard sell to recruit preschool educators. “Folks who have degrees that are related to early childhood education are harder and harder to find,” she said.

Some providers are offering signing bonuses, or attempting to “grow their own” preschool teachers by recruiting parents and connecting them with training and job opportunities. Katy Warren, deputy director of Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP, said a program in Vancouver worked with the nearby community college so parents could earn the right credentials. But even when a program can hire, they often have a hard time retaining staff.

“Programs who are able to pay their staff a lot more ... will have a lot lower turnover,” Warren said.

Of course the pandemic hasn’t helped. Many early education workers left as other businesses raised wages and strict COVID-19 protocols were put in place. Additional data from the center at Berkeley says preschool and child care programs across the country lost more than 116,000 workers during the pandemic, and that workforce remains at about 89% of what it was pre-COVID.

On top of low pay, preschool teachers are now also grappling with more behavioral and social demands from the children they work with. Some have missed out on essential development milestones.

“We have children who are showing up not potty trained yet,” said Ginger Williams, executive director of the Head Start program at Edmonds College. “We’re talking about 4-, 5-year-olds.”

Williams added that more students are being referred to the district for language delays or other special needs services, too.

Those are some of the same reasons why advocates say support for high-quality preschool programs is more vital now than ever. Both Head Start and the state program offer services to help families build parenting skills or find housing and essential items like diapers. Preschool is also an opportunity to prepare children socially and academically for kindergarten, with well-documented benefits on their brain development.

Marisela Chavez is a mom from Tacoma. She said she’s impressed with how social her 7-year-old twins are after going to preschool.

“I want all children to be enrolled in early learning programs regardless of their socioeconomic status,” she said. “It’s fundamental with their learning.”

Chavez said if it weren’t for the state’s ECEAP program, she wouldn’t have been able to go back to school to get her associate degree. But it’s difficult for families to access preschool programs for a number of reasons. Chavez said some experience language barriers. Some who are on the cusp of income eligibility want to pursue higher-earning jobs but can’t without losing critical subsidies.

That's why she went to Washington, D.C., this spring with a group from the state association's parent ambassador program, urging leaders to provide more money to educate children before they enter kindergarten — specifically for classroom teachers.

Washington is adding money and expanding its in-state programs — ECEAP and Transitional Kindergarten. State officials say ECEAP will become available to more families each year through 2026 when they expect all eligible children to have access to it. But Washington has a long way to go, with an estimated nearly 21,000 unserved eligible children statewide.

Steven Barnett, co-director of the National Institute for Early Education Research, said additional federal dollars could help Washington pick up the pace, hiring more educators at a time when the pandemic set the entire country back.

"It basically lost an entire decade of growth," he said. "This is really devastating."

Barnett wanted Congress to pass a big spending plan led by Democrats that would have in part provided more money for child care and preschool. It wasn't advanced because of Republicans' concerns about the price tag associated with its many provisions, but elected leaders like Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., say they want to move forward on some version of child care legislation.

"Even a little bit would make a huge difference," Barnett said. "It would put us on a different path as a country than what we're on now."

Expansion and quality improvements are likely to continue in states like Washington, where lawmakers are making policy moves of their own. In 2021 the Legislature passed the Fair Start for Kids Act that, among other things, raised income limits so families qualify for more financial assistance.

But Barnett said progress in Washington state and across the country will be much slower without federal action.

In the meantime, Warren said if people want to become certified or figure out how to join the ranks of early educators, they can check out programs at their nearby community college.

Or, she said, they can visit their nearest preschool — they're probably hiring.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Loophole in hemp; people still getting high
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/loophole-hemp-that-is-still-getting-people-high/B6DF53G23FGAVMNPL642ZLMNSI/
GIST	<p>A compound made from hemp, but can still get people high, has prompted confusion and debate over how it should be regulated, sold or banned in Washington.</p> <p>The substance, called "Delta-8 THC," has been popping up in products like gummies and candy.</p> <p>Tuesday morning, the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis discussed how it should deal with Delta-8.</p> <p>Cannabis is not legal at the federal level if it has high concentrations of the substance that makes people high: Delta-9 THC, or simply THC.</p> <p>However, hemp is legal at the federal level as long as it doesn't have high concentrations of the compounds of THC, though it does have certain levels.</p> <p>That created a loophole and some innovation as people were able to derive a strain of THC dubbed Delta-8 from hemp that made its way into products being sold across the U.S.</p>

	<p>Last week the 9th Circuit Court said it was all perfectly legal due to the legal status of hemp.</p> <p>Washington has always had strict control and regulations over the Cannabis industry, tracking and managing growers and stores.</p> <p>However, Delta-8 that comes from hemp could be packaged into products and sold, which is outside those regulations.</p> <p>KIRO 7 has found products on sale in smoke shops around our area and in some convenience stores.</p> <p>WALCB said in April 2021 that Delta-8, and similar intoxicating chemicals made from hemp, may not be produced or processed in LCB licensed facilities and may not be sold in licensed marijuana retail stores, but that clearly may need to change with the federal appeals court ruling.</p> <p>The State Liquor and Cannabis Board told KIRO 7 in May that it would continue research into the science behind THC strains derived or created from hemp, and they plan to further discuss the topic in June.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Pierce Co. monitors wastewater for Covid
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/pierce-county-using-wastewater-to-monitor-covid-19-in-community
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Dan Messier says it happens quickly.</p> <p>“It takes roughly 10 to 15 minutes of our staff’s time,” he said.</p> <p>He's the manager of Puyallup's Water Pollution Control Plant, the site that collects the area's wastewater.</p> <p>While the water here may look disgusting, this murky liquid is a gold mine, according to the Department of Health.</p> <p>“It’s a good community health tool,” Messier said. “We will be actually collecting the samples and will be sending the samples to the state of Washington laboratory.”</p> <p>Because within those samples are a snapshot of how prevalent COVID-19 is in this part of Pierce County.</p> <p>“There’s some really cool benefits to using wastewater and tracking COVID,” said Naomi Wilson with Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department</p> <p>According to Wilson, the wastewater collected here is used to track the virus to see if there is an uptick or decrease in infections.</p> <p>“This is a new surveillance tool that really helps us when our cases are being undercounted,” Wilson said.</p> <p>And that's the problem we're facing right now at this point in the pandemic because many people are choosing to test at home or are spreading the virus asymptotically.</p> <p>By testing wastewater, they can paint a better picture of how regions are doing.</p> <p>But even with all its benefits, it's not an overnight fix to accurately show the spread of the virus.</p> <p>For one, it doesn't identify demographics, age or specific cases and, according to the CDC, many wastewater programs that have already been started in the state haven't reported recent data in weeks.</p>

	<p>But Wilson says the benefits out way any detriment.</p> <p>“Our community is ready to look at some of these new tools as we move into living with COVID,” said Wilson.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Traffic crash fatalities reach 20yr-high
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/traffic-crash-fatalities-reach-20-year-high
GIST	<p>GRAHAM, Wash. - Data reviewed by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission reveals road deaths in 2021 reached a 20-year high, taking 663 lives.</p> <p>"The increase in deaths on our roads is tragic," said WTSC spokesperson Mark McKechnie in a press release.</p> <p>What's more, preliminary data covering the first quarter of 2022 show an increasing trend of fatalities over the same time last year. To combat the rising numbers of deaths, the commission will launch one of the largest campaigns ever devised by the agency, aimed at reinforcing safe driving behavior.</p> <p>"It's as simple as reminding them to buckle their safety belt or put their phone away when they drive," McKechnie added.</p> <p>The commission's announcement comes as Memorial Day marks the beginning of the "100 deadliest days of summer." Through Labor Day, more teens are killed in vehicle crashes than any other time through the year.</p> <p>Monday evening in Graham, a vehicle traveling northbound on SR 161 lost control, rolled and veered off the roadway coming to rest on its top. A 35-year-old woman from Graham was behind the wheel, along with a 15-year-old in the passenger's seat at the time of the crash. The driver died at the scene, said the Washington State Patrol. The official cause of the crash is under investigation, but troopers say neither person in the vehicle wore seatbelts.</p> <p>To combat the rising number of fatal crashes, WTSC's summer ad campaign "Together We Get There," is a call to action for families and neighbors to reinforce behavior that centers safety behind the wheel for everyone on the road.</p> <p>"Take an extra step and help someone close to you be safe, too," said McKechnie. "It's as simple as reminding them to buckle their seat belt or put their phone away when they drive."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle minimum wage gig delivery drivers
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/city-of-seattle-passes-legislation-that-guarantees-a-minimum-wage-for-delivery-drivers
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The Seattle City Council has unanimously passed legislation that would guarantee a minimum wage for app-based delivery drivers and gig workers, making it the first city in the nation to do so.</p> <p>Currently, drivers for organizations like UberEats, Grubhub and DoorDash get paid per ride, plus tips. The legislation passed, introduced by Councilmembers Lisa Herbold and Andrew Lewis, would set a minimum wage for those drivers at \$17/hour.</p> <p>"We live in an expensive city; many delivery workers earn below the minimum wage after expenses and tips are accounted for," said Herbold. "App-based work is one of the fastest-growing sectors of our</p>

economy with more workers turning to this type of work. The passage of this legislation will help tens of thousands of delivery workers make ends meet while maintaining their flexibility."

The legislation, dubbed PayUp Seattle, also prevents gig companies from penalizing workers in any way based on which jobs they choose to accept and reject, or which hours they are available for work.

The legislation also offers transparency protections—gig workers will have the right to up-front information about pay, tip, and other details of each job, as well as paystub information after each job is completed.

Additional ordinances in the PayUp package will follow in the months ahead, including forthcoming policies to address unwarranted deactivation, discrimination and harassment, bathroom access, and other basic protections.

Proponents of the legislation say about 40,000 people will be impacted.

However, gig company DoorDash told FOX 13 in April that it believes [the passing of PayUp](#) would "lead to dramatically increased costs of delivery, which would reduce orders."

The [company estimates Seattle businesses could lose over \\$74 million collectively](#) a year and DoorDash workers could lose over \$32 million in collective earnings due to an expected drop in orders.

In a statement to FOX 13 after the passing of PayUp, DoorDash said:

"Seattle City Council refused to hear from community members -- from restaurants to customers, to faith leaders, to communities of color -- who opposed this extreme policy that will dramatically increase costs on customers, reduce orders for merchants, and threaten earnings for Dashers. City Council also refused to study the impact of this proposal, despite widespread constituent concern. We are disappointed that City Council chose to ignore such a diverse slate of voices, but DoorDash will continue to fight for better policies across Seattle."

UberEats issued a similar statement to FOX 13:

"While we support efforts to improve earnings, the City Council's bill will likely result in less work for couriers, fewer orders for local restaurants, and price increases for Seattlites in a time of near record inflation. Delivery apps are a critical source of fresh food for 320,000 Seattlites, and a third of orders are from underserved communities - it's these communities that will most be impacted by higher costs and less demand."

In April, Uber told FOX 13 that the cost of rider fares increased nearly 50 percent following Seattle's wage law enacted in 2021.

The company further said it believes the policy will make services more costly for eaters, and modeling is clear that this will result in a loss of thousands of orders for small businesses and higher costs for people who are already struggling with record-high prices.

PayUp now heads to the desk of Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell for signature. The minimum wage would not go into effect for another 18 months or so, according to the city.

The city of Seattle did something similar in 2020 when it passed a minimum wage for ride-share drivers, like Lyft and Uber.

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HEADLINE	05/31 'One Seattle' Homelessness Action Plan
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/one-seattle-mayor-harrell-announces-homeless-strategy-relies-on-agency-he-has-limited-control-over

GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Pledging to be the most transparent mayor in Seattle's history, Bruce Harrell unveiled his administration's homelessness strategy on Tuesday.</p> <p>However, Harrell's plan relies heavily on the King County Regional Homeless Authority (KCRHA), an agency previous mayors did not have.</p> <p>"We are opening up the data for everyone to see, so you can see what I see," Harrell said during his announcement.</p> <p>The transparency he speaks of is a public-facing dashboard updated quarterly that anyone can view online and track the progress of the city's placement of individuals into housing, encampment removals and spending.</p> <p>It's called the One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan, part of a 'One Seattle'-branding technique the Mayor has been using since he took office at the beginning of the year.</p> <p>Seattle's total spending on homelessness has increased 125% over the last few years, going from \$77 million to \$173 million in 2022.</p> <p>The largest portion of this year's spending—\$118 million—will be going to the KCRHA for outreach services and housing. The City will spend \$9.8 million on removals of encampments and RVs, \$14.7 million on garbage pick-up and hygiene services, \$10 million on access to services and health, and \$18.8 million on the purchase of the 70-unit Dockside Apartments in Green Lake.</p> <p>Harrell and his team announced his homelessness plan on the front doorstep of the apartment building. 22 units will be for individuals earning 50% of the area median income, which is \$45,300 per year.</p> <p>However, KCRHA will manage the building and choosing the people who will call it home.</p> <p>The city's efforts to remove people off the street will depend on the shelter beds and housing available on any given day, said Tiffany Washington, Harrell's Deputy Mayor on Homelessness.</p> <p>Washington said the key to placement will be clearing the log jam of people staying in transitional housing and not getting into permanent housing.</p> <p>"We have enough beds—we don't need to build a bigger emergency room, we need people moving through them," said Washington.</p> <p>Part of the new strategy will be following a specific set of criteria for encampment and RV removals.</p> <p>"Is the environment safe, the condition of the people that are living there, it takes in proximity to vulnerable populations like a daycare or school, but we are testing this criteria, it has not been finalized," Washington explained.</p> <p>Washington said she's the ultimate decision maker on which encampments get cleared first, after deliberations with other city departments.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Supreme Court leak investigation heats up
SOURCE	https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/31/politics/supreme-court-roe-v-wade-leak-phone-records/index.html
GIST	(CNN)Supreme Court officials are escalating their search for the source of the leaked draft opinion that would overturn Roe v. Wade, taking steps to require law clerks to provide cell phone records and sign affidavits, three sources with knowledge of the efforts have told CNN.

Some clerks are apparently so alarmed over the moves, particularly the sudden requests for private cell data, that they have begun exploring whether to hire outside counsel.

The court's moves are unprecedented and the most striking development to date in the investigation into who might have provided Politico with the draft opinion it published on May 2. The probe has intensified the already high tensions at the Supreme Court, where the conservative majority is poised to roll back a half-century of abortion rights and privacy protections.

Chief Justice John Roberts met with law clerks as a group after the breach, CNN has learned, but it is not known whether any systematic individual interviews have occurred.

Lawyers outside the court who have become aware of the new inquiries related to cell phone details warn of potential intrusiveness on clerks' personal activities, irrespective of any disclosure to the news media, and say they may feel the need to obtain independent counsel.

"That's what similarly situated individuals would do in virtually any other government investigation," said one appellate lawyer with experience in investigations and knowledge of the new demands on law clerks. "It would be hypocritical for the Supreme Court to prevent its own employees from taking advantage of that fundamental legal protection."

Sources familiar with efforts underway say the exact language of the affidavits or the intended scope of that cell phone search -- content or time period covered -- is not yet clear.

The Supreme Court did not respond to a CNN request on Monday for comment related to the phone searches and affidavits.

The young lawyers selected to be law clerks each year are regarded as the elite of the elite. (Each justice typically hires four.) They are overwhelmingly graduates of Ivy League law schools and have had prior clerkships with prominent US appellate court judges.

Their one-year service becomes a golden ticket to prestigious law firms, top government jobs or professorships. Six of the current nine Supreme Court justices are former clerks.

The escalating scrutiny of law clerks reflects Roberts' concerns about the breach in confidentiality and possibly further leaks. It also suggests the court has been so far unsuccessful in determining Politico's source.

Roberts ordered the investigation on May 3, designating the court's marshal, Gail Curley, to lead the probe.

Curley, a lawyer and former Army colonel, oversees the police officers at the building. She is best known to the public as the person who chants, "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" at the beginning of the justices' oral argument sessions. The marshal's office would not normally examine the details of cell phone data or engage in a broad-scale investigation of personnel.

The investigation comes at the busiest time in the court's annual term, when relations among the justices are already taut. Assisted by their law clerks, the justices are pressing toward late June deadlines, trying to resolve differences in the toughest cases, all with new pressures and public scrutiny.

Because of protests and security concerns related to the Mississippi abortion case, the court building is surrounded by an 8-foot non-scalable fence and concrete barriers.

The justices are also resolving a New York dispute that could, based on their remarks during oral arguments in November, expand Second Amendment protection for gun owners. Additionally, the court could further lower the wall of separation between church and state by permitting certain prayer at public schools and requiring public vouchers for religious institutions.

The draft opinion in the case of Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization was written by Justice Samuel Alito and appeared to have a five-justice majority to completely reverse the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. That landmark ruling made abortion legal nationwide and buttressed other privacy interests not expressly stated in the Constitution. Some law professors have warned that if Roe is reversed, the Supreme Court's 2015 decision declaring a constitutional right to same-sex marriage could be in jeopardy.

Publication of the Alito draft opinion has already prompted national protests and dueling state legislative efforts -- to further eliminate all options for a woman seeking to terminate a pregnancy or, alternatively, to try to safeguard women's access to abortion where possible.

But it is difficult for anyone outside the building to know whether the Alito draft still commands a majority on a court tightly divided on abortion rights and split over how quickly to reverse precedent. Scrutiny of a secretive group

As the justices continue their secret negotiations, the scrutiny of the law clerks is heating up.

The clerks have been the subject of much of the outside speculation over who might have disclosed the draft, but they are not the only insiders who had access. Alito's opinion, labeled a first draft and dated February 10, would have been circulated to the nine justices, their clerks, and key staffers within each justice's chambers and select administrative offices.

If tradition was followed, copies were sent electronically and, separately, printed out and hand-delivered to chambers by aides to the marshal.

Other employees connected to the nine chambers would have had some access to the opinion. CNN could not verify that number, but former law clerks say the document could have been sent through regular channels to nearly 75 people. It is not known if court officials are asking employees who are part of the permanent staff, beyond the one-year law clerks, for their phone records.

Cell phones, of course, hold an enormous amount of information, related to personal interactions, involving all manner of content, texts and images, as well as apps used. It is uncertain whether details linked only to calls would be sought or whether a broader retrieval would occur.

There are protocols for handling drafts of court opinions, which circulate electronically on a closed system, separate from the computer system the justices and court employees use to communicate with people outside the court. Yet it is possible for printed copies to leave the building under even innocent circumstances, as work is taken home.

Court officials are secretive even in normal times. No progress reports related to the leak investigation have been made public, and it is not clear whether any report from the probe will ever be released.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Eurozone inflation hits record 8.1%
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/eurozone-inflation-hits-record-81-amid-rising-energy-85080064
GIST	<p>LONDON -- Inflation in the 19 countries that use the euro currency hit a record 8.1% in May amid surging energy costs prompted in part by Russia's war in Ukraine, authorities said Tuesday.</p> <p>Annual inflation in the eurozone soared past the previous record of 7.4% reached in March and April, according to the latest data from European Union statistics agency Eurostat.</p> <p>Energy prices jumped 39.2%, highlighting how the war and the accompanying global energy crunch are making life more expensive for the eurozone's 343 million people.</p>

	<p>Inflation in the eurozone is now at its highest level since recordkeeping for the euro began in 1997. The latest figures add pressure on European Central Bank policymakers to raise interest rates from ultralow levels to rein in the rising prices.</p> <p>Food prices also rose 7.5%, Eurostat said — another sign of how the war is pushing up prices around the world because Russia and Ukraine are major global food suppliers. Prices for goods like clothing, appliances, cars, computers and books rose 4.2%. Prices for services increased 3.5%, Eurostat said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Israel, UAE historic free trade agreement
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-uae-sign-free-trade-deal-arab-country-85080059
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM -- Israel and the United Arab Emirates signed a free trade agreement on Tuesday, the first of its kind that Israel has concluded with an Arab country.</p> <p>The UAE agreed to normalize relations with Israel in a U.S.-brokered deal in 2020, the first of the so-called Abraham Accords that Israel eventually concluded with four Arab nations. Since then, the two countries have boosted cooperation in a number of economic sectors.</p> <p>“Israel & the UAE just signed a historic Free Trade Agreement - the first of this scope to be signed between Israel & an Arab state,” Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett tweeted. “This was the fastest FTA to be signed in Israel’s history.”</p> <p>Mohamed Al Khaja, the UAE ambassador to Israel, called it “an unprecedented achievement.”</p> <p>“Businesses in both countries will benefit from faster access to markets and lower tariffs as our nations work together to increase trade, create jobs, promote new skills and deepen cooperation,” he tweeted.</p> <p>Dorian Barak, president of the UAE-Israel Business Council, predicted that bilateral trade would exceed \$2 billion this year, rising to \$5 billion in the next five.</p> <p>"Dubai is fast becoming a hub for Israeli companies that look to South Asia, the Middle East and the Far East as markets for their goods and services," he said. "Nearly 1,000 Israeli companies will be working in and through the UAE by year’s end. It’s unprecedented.”</p> <p>Israel has more limited commercial relations with neighboring Jordan and Egypt, Arab countries that signed peace treaties with Israel decades ago.</p> <p>In the years leading up to the Abraham Accords, Israel had steadily increased cooperation with Gulf Arab states like the UAE, which share its security concerns about Iran.</p> <p>Supporters of the accords view them as an historic breakthrough in Mideast diplomacy. The Palestinians rejected the accords as a betrayal of their cause because they shattered a longstanding Arab consensus that any normalization with Israel should come in exchange for progress in the long-defunct peace process.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Mayor: Russia seizes half Sievierodonetsk
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sievierodonetsk-mayor-russian-forces-seize-half-city-85080801
GIST	<p>SLOVIANSK, Ukraine -- Russian forces in a “frenzied push” have seized half of the eastern Ukrainian city of Sievierodonetsk that is key to Moscow’s efforts to quickly complete the capture of the industrial Donbas region, the mayor told The Associated Press on Tuesday.</p>

“The city is essentially being destroyed ruthlessly block by block,” Oleksandr Striuk said. He said heavy street fighting continues and artillery bombardments threaten the lives of the estimated 13,000 civilians still sheltering in the ruined city that once was home to more than 100,000.

It’s impossible to track civilian casualties amid the round-the-clock shelling, said the mayor, who believes that more than 1,500 residents have died of various causes since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in late February. Evacuation efforts from Sievierodonetsk have been halted because of shelling.

“Civilians are dying from direct strikes, from fragmentation wounds and under the rubble of destroyed buildings, since most of the inhabitants are hiding in basements and shelters,” Striuk said.

Electricity to the city has been cut off and people need water, food and medicine, the mayor said: “There are food supplies for several more days, but the issue is how to distribute them.”

Sievierodonetsk is important to Russian efforts to capture the Donbas before more Western arms arrive to bolster Ukraine’s defense. Moscow-backed separatists already held territory in the region and have been fighting Ukrainian troops for eight years.

Military analysts described the fight for Sievierodonetsk as part of a race against time for the Kremlin. The city, which is 145 kilometers (90 miles) south of the Russian border, is in an area that is the last pocket of Ukrainian government control in the Luhansk region.

In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the situation in the Donbas remains “extremely difficult” as Russia has put its army’s “maximum combat power” there.

At least three people were killed and six more wounded overnight in a Russian missile strike on the city of Sloviansk, west of Sievierodonetsk, Donetsk regional governor Pavlo Kyrilenko said in a Facebook post on Tuesday morning. A school was among several buildings damaged. A crater marked the road between two apartment buildings heavily pockmarked by shrapnel.

Blood smeared the floor and stairwell of one building.

Resident Olena Voytenko, 59, said she knew one of the people killed, a man whose apartment caught fire in the blast. She believes he burned to death.

Another resident, Mikhaylo Samoluk, said the strike occurred roughly after 1:30 a.m.

“I was on my sofa and suddenly my sofa just jumped in the air,” he said.

In neighboring Luhansk, two people were killed and four were wounded by shelling, Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai said Tuesday on Telegram. Haidai didn’t specify when or where the attack occurred.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Taiwan: US National Guard ‘cooperation’
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/china/tsai-says-us-national-guard-planning-cooperation-with-taiwan-military-2022-05-31/
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, May 31 (Reuters) - The United States is planning on "cooperation" between its National Guard and Taiwan's military, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said on Tuesday, deepening security ties in the face of what Taipei's government complains is a rising threat from China.</p> <p>The United States is Chinese-claimed Taiwan's most important international supporter and arms supplier, despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties. China has been stepping up its military activities near Taiwan and its military said last week it had recently conducted an exercise around Taiwan as a "solemn warning" against "collusion" with the United States.</p>

Meeting visiting U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth in Taipei, Tsai noted that Duckworth was one of the main sponsors of the Taiwan Partnership Act, which has received bipartisan support though has yet to become law.

"As a result, the U.S. Department of Defense is now proactively planning cooperation between the U.S. National Guard and Taiwan's defence forces," Tsai said, without giving details.

"We look forward to closer and deeper Taiwan-U.S. cooperation on matters of regional security," she added.

Taiwanese media has previously reported that Taiwan could partner with Hawaii's National Guard for the programme.

The exercise by China's military came after U.S. President Joe Biden angered China by appearing to signal a change in a U.S. policy of "strategic ambiguity" on Taiwan by saying the United States would become involved militarily if China were to attack the island. U.S. officials said there had been no change in policy.

Tsai has been overseeing the modernisation of Taiwan's armed forces, including reforming its reserve forces to make them more combat capable.

Speaking later with Taiwan Premier Su Tseng-chang, Duckworth said she had brought with her the director of the U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program "which will be working with you on setting up your all-out defence".

She did not elaborate. The State Partnership Program pairs U.S. National Guard units with other countries to help with training and interoperability.

Taiwan was, however, not included in the United States' Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity, or IPEF, last week despite its lobbying efforts.

Tsai said Taiwan will keep expressing its willingness to participate.

"In the near future, we look forward to Taiwan and the United States working together in taking new steps to develop concrete plans that further deepen our economic partnership."

China's Foreign Ministry expressed its opposition to Duckworth's visit, as it does to all high-level engagements between Taiwan and the United States.

"China will continue to take strong measures to resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity," ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said in Beijing.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/31 Data: only 2 browsers with 1B+ users
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2022/05/safari-has-1-billion-users-but-it-still-cant-touch-chrome/
GIST	<p>Apple's Safari web browser has more than 1 billion users, according to an estimate by Atlas VPN. Only one other browser has more than a billion users, and that's Google's Chrome. But at nearly 3.4 billion, Chrome still leaves Safari in the dust.</p> <p>It's important to note that these numbers include mobile users, not just desktop users. Likely, Safari's status as the default browser for both the iPhone and iPad plays a much bigger role than its usage on the Mac.</p>

Still, it's impressive given that Safari is the only major web browser not available on Android, which is the world's most popular mobile operating system, or Windows, the most popular desktop OS.

Atlas VPN wrote this [on its blog](#) to explain how it got to the number:

The statistics are based on the GlobalStats browser market share percentage, which was then converted into numbers using the Internet World Stats internet user metric to retrieve the exact numbers.

According to the data, Chrome has approximately 3,378,967,819 users, while Safari has 1,006,232,879. In a very distant third place is Microsoft's Edge, at 212,695,363. Firefox is hot on Edge's tails in fourth at 179,084,244.

The blog post claims that Edge only just overtook Firefox for the third-place spot in the past year.

Meanwhile, Chrome has been dominant for a long time after it supplanted Microsoft's Internet Explorer. If the news was just that Chrome is the biggest browser, that wouldn't even be worth reporting—these days, Chrome *is* the web, to a degree. And it's worth noting that the newest versions of the third-place browser, Edge, are built on Google's Chromium.

Apple used to have broader ambitions with Safari, in that there was once a Windows version of the browser. But Apple discontinued the development of that version in June 2010. You can technically still run Safari on Windows 10 or 11, but it wouldn't be the best idea security-wise.

And while Safari is the default web browser on iOS, it is possible to install and use third-party browsers on the iPhone and iPad. [Since 2020](#), it's been possible to set something other than Safari as your default browser.

That said, the difference between Safari and a third-party browser on the iPhone is skin-deep.

Alternative browsers like Chrome or Firefox still use Safari's core technologies under the hood; they simply allow users to use bookmarks and other additional features found in those browsers on other platforms.

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HEADLINE	05/31 China state media infiltrates search engines
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/chinese-state-media-88-percent-news-results/
GIST	<p>A think tank says Chinese state media have proven very effective at influencing search engine results for users seeking information on Xinjiang, a region of China where the Uyghur ethnic minority has been subjected to what the State Department calls genocide.</p> <p>The findings on the Chinese manipulation of prominent American search engines came via Brookings Institution scholars Friday, following on the heels of the BBC's release of disturbing images of Uyghur detainees accompanied by documents detailing a Chinese shoot-to-kill policy for detainees who try to escape.</p> <p>Brookings also studied search engine results for Chinese state propaganda relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, a topic that Beijing has proven eager to control due to widespread condemnation of its botched early response to the crisis. The Chinese propaganda called the State Department's genocide allegations the "lie of the century" and suggested the U.S. is to blame for the pandemic due to activities at Fort Detrick, a military base which hosted the American biological weapons program until 1969.</p> <p>The research team compiled daily data over a 120-day period on 12 terms related to Xinjiang and COVID-19 from five different sources: Google Search; Google News; Bing Search; Bing News; and YouTube, which Google owns.</p> <p>At least one Chinese state-backed news outlet appeared in the top 10 results in 88% of searches, the researchers found. On YouTube, state media appeared even more often, showing up in 98% of searches.</p>

A Bing spokesperson provided a statement which said the company is “always looking for ways to learn and improve and are reviewing the detailed findings in this report.” Google also issued a statement, saying that it “actively works to combat coordinated influence and censorship operations while also protecting access to information and free expression online.” The statement said that third party research shows Google Search “consistently returns high quality results, especially compared to other search engines.”

[Disinformation](#) scholars called the Brookings research important because it focuses on search engines returning propaganda, which has historically been an understudied element of the disinformation landscape compared to more prominent threats such as bots and forged Twitter accounts.

The research underscores how vital it is for Google and Microsoft to do more to avoid disseminating propaganda in part by becoming more transparent about how their algorithms work, according to Justin Sherman, a disinformation scholar at the Atlantic Council’s Cyber Statecraft Initiative. The search engines should consider applying the de-ranking policies which are currently used to limit Russian state content to Chinese content, Sherman said.

Chinese state-backed media outlets have wide circulation and are even available in print in major cities like New York, making it more difficult to curtail their prominence in news search results, he said.

“It is not surprising that the Chinese government is getting better and better at promoting its narrative through Western search engines,” Sherman said. “We often think about how authoritarian regimes and other bad actors spread propaganda and disinformation through social media platforms — and less about how they use search engines, web hosting and other parts of the internet ecosystem to achieve their goals.”

Other disinformation experts said they were surprised by the degree to which Chinese state media is infiltrating Google and Microsoft search engines.

[Chinese state propaganda](#) surfacing so consistently in the top 10 search results for Google and Bing is unexpected in part because of the perception that China and the West rely on “two separate internets,” said Adam Segal, the director of the Digital and Cyberspace Policy program at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Segal said that because China has historically focused on disseminating propaganda to its domestic audience, he was struck by Beijing’s apparent success at manipulating Google and Microsoft algorithms to reach a Western audience.

The Brookings researchers — who partnered with researchers from the German Marshall Fund’s Alliance for Securing Democracy on the project— found that search results for what they called “conspiratorial terms” across all search types yielded a high volume of Chinese propaganda.

For example, a search for “Fort Detrick” — a military base in Maryland that has figured prominently in China’s efforts to spread disinformation about the origins of the coronavirus outbreak — yielded 619 observations of videos from Chinese state media outlets appearing in top 10 search results on YouTube during the four-month-long study.

Jessica Brandt, the Brookings scholar who led the research, said she was struck by how extensively Chinese propaganda appeared in search results.

“What that means is that users who are coming to search for neutral information can easily stumble upon propaganda,” Brandt said. “One useful intervention here could be just better labeling of state news sources in search results.”

Brandt said the pervasiveness of Chinese propaganda is a bigger issue in Google News searches than general Google searches, which she said is unsurprising since Google News is more tightly focused whereas Google searches are for the whole internet.

“The phenomenon that we’re catching here is that search engines are working as they’re designed to — they’re supposed to surface the most fresh, recent, relevant news articles,” Brandt said. “But The New York Times or other credible, authoritative, independent sources are going to debunk a conspiracy theory like the [Fort Detrick conspiracy](#) once and they’re going to move on. And Beijing’s propaganda apparatus does not need to move on — they can churn out a vast array of content that hammers this theory over and over and over again.”

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HEADLINE	05/31 Calif. Partnership HealthPlan data theft
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/breach/after-hive-cyberattack-partnership-healthplan-confirms-data-theft-affecting-855k
GIST	<p>Following reports of network downtime after a cyberattack in March, Partnership HealthPlan of California has since confirmed the Hive ransomware group stole a trove of health information ahead of the ransomware deployment. Reports show 854,913 patients were impacted.</p> <p>As previously reported, PHC faced a long period of computer system disruptions immediately following the attack and were working with third-party working forensic specialists to recover the network. The incident also disrupted PHC’s ability to receive or process treatment authorization requests, the forms used to gain pre-approved funding for treatment.</p> <p>At the time, multiple reports claimed Hive was behind the attack, after a dark web posting of data proofs allegedly exfiltrated from PHC. The listing was soon removed, but screenshots showed proofs containing approximately 850,000 unique records, or about 400GB of data.</p> <p>The official breach notice from PHC confirms the attack was deployed on March 19 and that its investigation found evidence the hacker accessed or stolen patient data from the network on the same day.</p> <p>The stolen data could include patient names, Social Security numbers, driver’s licenses, Tribal IDs, medical record numbers, treatments, diagnoses, prescriptions, medical data, health insurance details, patient portal credentials, and other sensitive information.</p> <p>PHC is still working to identify the information contained in the stolen files and just what patients were involved. All impacted patients will receive two years of credit monitoring services.</p> <p>Unfortunately, PHC is included in the spate of healthcare data breach lawsuits filed within the last six months. For the California health plan, a law firm filed a lawsuit on behalf of patient “John Joe” on May 17.</p> <p>The lawsuit is currently soliciting other patients to join the suit. As noted in an earlier SC Media report, these advertisements are increasingly common but are ethically questionable given the Supreme Court ruling on actual harm and the highly targeted nature of the sector that puts the majority of providers at risk of a breach.</p> <p>Cooper University Health reports breach from December</p> <p>Cooper University Health Care is just now informing an undisclosed number of current and former patients that their data was accessed or likely stolen after an email hack in December 2021. Cooper is a health system with sites across south New Jersey and the Delaware Valley.</p> <p>The almost six-month delay in notification should serve as a reminder that the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act requires patients to be notified of breaches to their health information within 60 days of discovery and without undue delay — not at the close of a lengthy forensic analysis.</p>

Cooper first “learned of unusual activity” within an employee's email account on Dec. 13, 2021. The accounts were quickly secured and an investigation was launched with support from an outside cybersecurity team.

The investigation confirmed an employee email account was hacked on Nov. 24, 2021, several weeks before it was discovered. The potentially stolen data could include names, dates of birth, provider names, diagnoses, treatment information, billing and claims data, and medical record numbers.

Hack, data theft at Val Verde medical center impacts 87K patients

The personal and protected health information tied to 86,562 patients of [Val Verde Regional](#) Medical Center in Texas was stolen after a “network disruption” on March 10.

Upon discovery, VVRMC secured the network and launched an investigation with support from third-party digital forensics experts. The post-mortem determined that a threat actor was able to access or acquire “certain files” during the security incident. The medical center also contacted the FBI and is cooperating with their investigation.

The impacted data included patient names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, medical information, health insurance details, and other data. All patients will receive free identity monitoring services.

Notably, VVRMC apologized for the timing of the notification: “While the extensive data identification and processing was lengthy and time-consuming, it was a necessary process that helped us thoroughly identify the impacted individuals.” But the notice appears to have been sent within the 60-day HIPAA requirement.

VVRMC has since bolstered its security measures to prevent a recurrence.

Email hack impacts 90K Alameda Health patients

California-based Alameda Health System recently notified the Department of Health and Human Services that an email hack compromised the data belonging to 90,000 patients.

There are currently no public breach notices detailing the incident. However, the notice comes less than two years after the health system reported [another email hack](#) that wasn’t discovered for nearly two months. It should serve as a reminder for provider organizations to learn from past mistakes to avoid regulatory issues and protect patient privacy.

SAC Health reports paper records theft affecting 150K

In one of the largest thefts of paper records reported in recent years, Social Action Community Health System [recently notified](#) 149,940 patients that their information was stolen after a break-in at its off-site storage facility. The notice comes after [SAC Health](#) sent notice to 28,000 patients following the hack of its vendor, Netgain, in 2020.

SAC Health was notified of the incident on March 4, where a burglar stole six boxes of paper documents from the facility. The provider has been working with local law enforcement with its investigation, alongside its own. It’s since been confirmed the theft included data tied to patients who visited SAC in 1997 and between 2006 and 2020.

The information stored in the stolen containers could include contact details, dates of birth, and diagnosis codes. All patients will receive complimentary credit monitoring services. SAC Health is currently assessing its policies and procedures for paper document storage.

Allwell Behavioral hack impacts 30K patients

A “data security incident” at [Allwell Behavioral](#) Health in Georgia likely led to the theft of protected health information tied to 29,972 patients.

	<p>The subsequent investigation found that an attacker first gained access to a computer system used to store quality assurance information on March 2. The incident was detected three days later. During that time, the actor was able to take “an undetermined number of files containing client information.”</p> <p>The stolen data was related to treatments and could include patient names, dates of birth, SSNs, contact information, treatment activity and dates, locations, and payer details. All impacted patients will receive free identity theft protection services.</p> <p>Allwell has since upgraded its IT and computer systems to bolster security and prevent further unauthorized access.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Chinese APT exploits Windows zero-day
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/chinese-threat-actors-exploiting-follina-vulnerability
GIST	<p>The Windows zero-day vulnerability identified as Follina and CVE-2022-30190 is being exploited in an increasing number of attacks, including by a Chinese APT group.</p> <p>The existence of the flaw, which can be exploited for remote code execution, came to light on May 27, when a malicious document exploiting it was spotted in the wild. The vulnerability was dubbed Follina by researcher Kevin Beaumont, one of the first members of the cybersecurity community to analyze the exploit.</p> <p>The security hole is related to the Microsoft Support Diagnostic Tool (MSDT), with the exploit being triggered when the targeted user opens a specially crafted document.</p> <p>While a patch has yet to be released, Microsoft noted that Protected View, a feature designed to block these types of attacks, should protect users. However, researchers determined that if the attacker delivers the exploit as an RTF file, the exploit is triggered when a preview of the file is viewed in Explorer, and Protected View does not step into action.</p> <p>Huntress warned in a blog post that threat actors can exploit the flaw to “elevate their own privileges and potentially gain ‘god mode’ access to the affected environment.”</p> <p>Microsoft has known about the vulnerability since April, when it was notified by a member of Shadow Chaser Group, a research team focusing on APT hunting and analysis.</p> <p>The researcher who informed Microsoft said the tech giant initially classified it as “not a security related issue,” despite being warned that a sample exploiting it had been seen in the wild. After a different researcher reported seeing a document exploiting the vulnerability on May 27, Microsoft assigned it a CVE, released mitigation guidance, and confirmed that it is an actively exploited zero-day vulnerability.</p> <p>Exploitation works against Office Pro Plus, Office 2013, Office 2016, Office 2019 and Office 2021, but some evidence suggests Microsoft may have been trying to address the issue before its existence was made public.</p> <p>An increasing number of files exploiting the Follina vulnerability have been found in the wild. Exploitation appears to have started in April, with users in India and Russia being targeted in attacks leveraging various themes, including interview requests and extortion.</p> <p>Proofpoint reported on Tuesday that a threat actor tracked as TA413, which was previously linked to China, has exploited the vulnerability in its attacks on the Tibetan community. TA413 has targeted Tibet for years and the attacks involving the Follina zero-day use the “Women Empowerments Desk” of the Central Tibetan Administration as a lure.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The SANS Institute has also discovered a document exploiting CVE-2022-30190 to deliver malware. The file's name is written in Chinese and translates to "Mobile phone room to receive orders - channel quotation - the lowest price on the whole network."</p> <p>Official patches are not available, but there are workarounds and mitigations, both from Microsoft and the cybersecurity community. Security firms have updated their products to detect attacks, but as more information and PoC exploits become available, there will likely be more exploitation attempts.</p> <p>The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) is advising organizations to review the guidance from Microsoft.</p> <p>In his blog post on Follina, Beaumont pointed out that there have been several events leading up to this moment over the past couple of years. Research describing how MSDT can be abused for code execution was published in August 2020 and March 2022. In addition, in 2021, Microsoft stealthily patched a similar vulnerability in Teams.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 FBI warns Ukraine charities impersonated
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fbi-warns-of-ukrainian-charities-impersonated-to-steal-donations/
GIST	<p>Scammers are claiming to be collecting donations to help Ukrainian refugees and war victims while impersonating legitimate Ukrainian humanitarian aid organizations, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).</p> <p>The alert comes after a long stream of reports from security vendors and people who have spotted similar scams online since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24.</p> <p>"The FBI warns the public of fraudulent schemes seeking donations or other financial assistance related to the crisis in Ukraine," the US law enforcement agency said this week in a public service announcement.</p> <p>"Criminal actors are taking advantage of the crisis in Ukraine by posing as Ukrainian entities needing humanitarian aid or developing fundraising efforts, including monetary and cryptocurrency donations."</p> <p>As BleepingComputer has also reported in March, we've seen an explosion of "help Ukraine" and "donate to Ukraine" scams attempting to convince donors they are legitimate charities collecting donations to support Ukraine since the start of the war.</p> <p>These scams have slowly escalated, with crooks impersonating the Ukrainian government, the Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund, the Act for Peace, and UNICEF.</p> <p>They are particularly dangerous given that they appeal to emotions that many may not be able to resist, especially during moments when donations could prove to be crucial to helping Ukrainians affected by the ongoing war.</p> <p>The fact that the Ukrainian government is also actively seeking cryptocurrency donations may have also unintentionally lent credibility to such scams.</p> <p>Those looking to donate to Ukraine can ensure they're only contributing to the official Ukrainian government wallet addresses, ignoring suspicious donation emails, social media posts, and potentially scam donation sites.</p> <p>Those who fall victim to such a scam are advised to report the incident to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Telegram's blogging platform abused
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/telegram-s-blogging-platform-abused-in-phishing-attacks/
GIST	<p>Telegram's anonymous blogging platform, Telegraph, is being actively exploited by phishing actors who take advantage of the platform's lax policies to set up interim landing pages that lead to the theft of account credentials.</p> <p>Telegraph is a blogging platform that lets anyone publish anything without creating an account or providing any identification details.</p> <p>While this provides anonymity to the publisher, it also opens itself up to widescale abuse by threat actors for their own campaigns.</p> <p>The published Telegraph posts generate a link that threat actors may distribute in whatever way they choose, but there's no central location to promote these posts to the community. Hence, Telegraph is fast, simple, and anonymous.</p> <p>Moreover, because Telegraph's editor supports the addition of images, links, and offers text formatting options, one could make a blog post appear like a web page, including login forms.</p> <p>Phishing pages According to a report by INKY shared with Bleeping Computer before publication, phishing actors use Telegraph extensively to create phishing sites that look like website landing pages or login portals.</p> <p>INKY's data from the end of 2019 until May 2022 shows that the inclusion of Telegraph links in phishing emails has been going through a steep rise recently, as over 90% of all detections occurred this year.</p> <p>The phishing email delivery rates are excellent because these links are hosted on Telegraph, a platform not marked as dangerous or suspicious by any email security solutions.</p> <p>In many cases, INKY noticed that the phishing emails came from hijacked email accounts, so blocklists on known scam addresses were bypassed.</p> <p>In most of the recorded cases, the goal of phishing actors is to conduct cryptocurrency scams or harvest the account credentials of their targets.</p> <p>The cases seen by INKY vary greatly, indicating that Telegraph's abuse is coming from multiple groups/actors, not a specific threat cluster.</p> <p>One example is a OneDrive notice that leads to a realistic-looking Microsoft login page where the victim is prompted to enter their account credentials.</p> <p>In another case, INKY saw an extortion message that threatened that they would leak private files if the recipient did not pay a ransom. The payment portal is directly hosted on Telegraph, offering multiple payment options for the scammed victims.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Hive hits Costa Rica public health agency
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/costa-rica-s-public-health-agency-hit-by-hive-ransomware/
GIST	<p>All computer systems on the network of Costa Rica's public health service (known as Costa Rican Social Security Fund or CCCS) are now offline following a Hive ransomware attack that hit them this morning.</p> <p>Hive, a Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) operation active since at least June 2021, has been behind attacks on over 30 organizations, counting only the victims who refused to pay the ransom and had their data leaked online.</p>

BleepingComputer was able to confirm that Hive ransomware was behind today's attack after seeing one of the ransom notes.

The CCCS publicly acknowledged the attack three hours ago in a statement issued on Twitter, [saying](#) that the attackers hacked their way into its network "in the early hours of Tuesday."

While an investigation is still ongoing, the Costa Rican government agency says that citizens' health and tax information stored in the EDUS (Unified Digital Health) and the SICERE (Centralized Tax-Collection System) databases was not compromised.

Employees reported [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)] that they were told to shut down their computers and unplug them from the networks after all the printers on the govt agency's network began printing when the attack started.

Some also [shared](#) video proof showing stacks of dozens of printed pages filled with gibberish ASCII-based text.

CCCS is now working [on restoring](#) the affected systems and critical services, but, so far, it is impossible to determine how long it will take until systems are back up.

Attack follow a streak of Conti hacks

The incident comes after Costa Rica [declared a national emergency](#) following Conti ransomware attacks that hit multiple government bodies, including the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS).

The list of government entities hit by Conti affiliates also includes the country's Ministry of Finance, its Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS), the Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology, and Telecommunications, and the Social Development and Family Allowances Fund (FODESAF).

"The attack that Costa Rica is suffering from cybercriminals is declared a national emergency and we are signing this decree, precisely, to declare a state of national emergency throughout the public sector of the Costa Rican State and allow our society to respond to these attacks as criminal acts," said the Costa Rican President when signing the Executive Decree No. 42542 on May 8.

The Conti gang has demanded a [\\$10 million ransom](#) from the Costa Rican Ministry of Finance which the government [declined to pay](#).

The U.S. government is now offering [rewards of up to \\$15 million](#) to anyone who can provide information that can lead to the identification and arrest of Conti ransomware's leadership and operators.

The Conti - Hive link

While Conti is now slowly shutting down operations, it has [partnered with numerous well-known ransomware operations](#), including Hive and HelloKitty, AvosLocker, BlackCat, BlackByte, and others. Its members have now splintered into smaller semi-autonomous and autonomous groups that have infiltrated the other RaaS groups.

They've also created independent groups focused on data exfiltration and not data encryption (e.g., [Karakurt](#), [BlackByte](#), and the [Bazarcall collective](#)).

Since Conti members have joined Hive's ranks, the groups have begun leaking the victims' data on both leak blogs although they're denying there's any link between the two gangs.

"AdvIntel identified and confirmed with a high level of certainty that Conti has been working with HIVE for over half a year - since at least November 2021. We have identified extended evidence of HIVE actively using both the initial attack accesses provided by Conti and the services of Conti's pentesters," [Advanced Intel's](#) Yelisey Boguslavskiy told BleepingComputer.

	<p>"The same individuals were working for both Conti and HIVE, as it is seen in the same victims appearing on shame blogs of both HIVE and Conti simultaneously. HIVE currently serves as one of the negotiation escape roots for Conti.</p> <p>"Conti members continue negotiations with the victims that they have previously breached under the HIVE brand. This gives them an opportunity to get paid, as, unlike Conti, HIVE is not associated with the direct support of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, despite the fact that the ransom paid to HIVE is most likely received by the same individuals within Conti who claimed the group's collective alignment to the Russian government."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Exposed: 3.6M MySQL servers online
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities-threats/3-6m-plus-mysql-servers-with-ipv4-ipv6-addresses-exposed-scan-shows
GIST	<p>Shadowserver researchers scanning the Internet for exposed MySQL servers said they received more than 2.3 million IPv4- and 1.3 million IPv6 addresses in response to their connection requests on port 3306/TCP, indicating the connected servers were wide open to attack.</p> <p>Of the more than 3.6 million exposed MySQL servers, most were located in the US, with more than 740,000; followed by China, with more than 296,000; and Poland, with more than 207,000 accessible devices.</p> <p>"It is unlikely that you need to have your MySQL server allowing for external connections from the Internet (and thus a possible external attack surface)," Shadowserver said in a post about the MySQL findings. "If you do receive a report on your network/constituency, take action to filter out traffic to your MySQL instance and make sure to implement authentication on the server."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 RansomHouse: extortion, no ransomware
SOURCE	https://blog.malwarebytes.com/cybercrime/2022/05/threat-profile-ransomhouse-makes-extortion-work-without-ransomware/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity is an industry known for many hats: white hats, black hats, and grey hats. White hats refer to "the good people" in the industry for those who are not in the know. They are malware analysts, security researchers, and penetration testers. Black hats are the opposite of white hats, and we collectively refer to them as cybercriminals.</p> <p>The existence of a third hat is intriguing but not surprising. It denotes black hats have the potential to be and do good. On the other hand, white hats can put one foot on the dark side while leaving a reassuring foot in the light.</p> <p>Security researchers have speculated that a new extortion group called RansomHouse is a collection of "frustrated" white hats who have collectively been pushed to the point of punishing organizations that continue to have lax security in their infrastructure.</p> <p>RansomHouse 101 RansomHouse is a new extortion group that gets into victims' networks by exploiting vulnerabilities to steal data and coerces victims to pay up, lest their data is sold to the highest bidder. And if no criminal is interested in buying the data, the group leaks it on their leak site.</p> <p>This group is also unique in the way it extorts money from victims. They appear to market themselves as penetration testers and bug bounty hunters more than your average online extortionist. After stealing data from targets, they offer to delete it and then provide a full report on what vulnerabilities they exploited and how.</p>

Like ransomware groups, they also have channels in place—a Telegram account and a leak site—to communicate with victims, journalists, and those who want to track their activities.

RansomHouse is believed to have emerged in December 2021 and currently has four victims, the first of which was Canada’s [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority \(SLGA\)](#), a regulator of alcohol, cannabis, and most gambling in the province, which [first reported a breach](#) in that same month and year.

According to the “About” page on RansomHouse’s Onion site, they call themselves “a professional mediators community.”

Below are reprints of sections from that page:

We have nothing to do with any breaches and don't produce or use any ransomware. Our primary goal is to minimize the damage that might be sustained by related parties.

We believe that the culprits are not the ones who found the vulnerability or carried out the hack, but those who did not take proper care of security. The culprits are those who did not put a lock on the door leaving it wide open inviting everyone in.

But evolution cannot be stopped, fitting structures emerge in every environment, and so groups of enthusiasts have emerged on the grounds of data negligence, eager to get paid honestly by streamlining this chaos through public punishment. These methods of making money and pointing out companies' mistakes may be controversial, and when you recall that we are talking about billion-dollar corporations on the opposing side, it becomes clear why the RansomHouse team is so important to engage in dialogue. That is what this project is all about - bringing conflicting parties together, helping them to set up a dialogue and make informed, balanced decisions. The team works hard to find a way out of even the most difficult situations and allow both parties to go forward without changing rules as they go along. Incompetence and fuss is unacceptable when dealing with such cases, which is exactly what happens most often. Here and now we are creating a new culture and streamlining this industry.

The “About” page, which reads more like a manifesto, is telling. First, it openly declares that organizations, not the cybercriminals after their data, are the real “culprits” for certain types of cyberattacks. Second, the bug hunters who find flaws in systems or networks owned by organizations, which may not have a bounty program in place, must be recognized for the time and effort to find these flaws and be compensated appropriately.

Cyberint’s Shmuel Gihon [indicated](#) that RansomHouse is “practically forcing ‘penetration testing service’ on organizations that never used their services or rewarded bug bounties.”

Lastly, the group puts itself at the center as an entity that’ll make things right, calling this entire endeavor a “project” instead of what it really is: an extortion scheme with the facade of a good samaritan. The group’s actions benefit no one but them and their associates, embolden others to act out their frustration, and—if they are indeed white hats in a midlife crisis—slowly erode the foundations of trust and integrity the cybersecurity industry stands on.

Links with ransomware groups

RansomHouse has been firm about its non-use of ransomware in its exploits despite the group’s name. They also reportedly do not encrypt files they stole from organizations. However, it is worth noting that the group [has a history of collaborating with ransomware gangs](#), such as White Rabbit.

BleepingComputer pointed out the group was mentioned in one of White Rabbit’s ransom notes.

One can also see RansomHouse’s possible link to the Hive ransomware group.

Hagar Margolin, cyberanalyst for Webz.io, a company providing machine-defined web data, pointed out the uncanny similarities of Hive’s leak site post to that of RansomHouse’s.

	<p>Are they really disgruntled bug bounty hunters? Bug hunting could be a way of living. Much like many of the jobs within the cybersecurity industry, it's not as glamorous as some people make it.</p> <p>Of course, getting rich hunting for inherent flaws would depend on the severity of the bug found and the availability of a bounty program in an organization. Bug hunting wouldn't be as lucrative if one or both of these aren't fully satisfied.</p> <p>Gihon assessed that RansomHouse "might have a blue and red team background and might even be disgruntled bug bounty hunters looking to be taken more seriously by organizations." In cybersecurity, a "blue team" plays the role of Defender in a cyberattack. In contrast, a "red team" plays the role of Adversary.</p> <p>What led Cyberint to this theory is RansomHouse's overall professional demeanor when communicating with others. They were seen as polite and focused, not easily swayed away into irrelevant conversations. The group also claimed they're "pro-freedom," "very liberal," and won't have anything to do with radical hacktivists or espionage groups.</p> <p>Cyberint also touched on a known problem within the bug bounty community that is currently brewing.</p> <p>"Many of the bug bounty hunter community members have been complaining for some time now about companies that do not want to pay the bounty for their hard labour while still enjoying its fruits," Gihon said. "Bug bounty programs also increase their commissions making the bug bounty hunter a very frustrating profession."</p> <p>The struggles with bug hunting may be real, but according to one expert, even calling RansomHouse a group of bug hunters could be inaccurate.</p> <p>In an interview with BleepingComputer, Emsisoft Threat Analyst Brett Callow said that actors behind the White Rabbit ransomware may be behind RansomHouse:</p> <p>"The RansomHouse platform is supposedly used by 'club members' who carry out attacks using their own tools—and, according to them, those tools include ransomware such as White Rabbit. I suspect, however, that their claims are untrue and that the same individuals who carry out the attacks are also behind RansomHouse."</p> <p>Regardless of the group's origins, one thing is clear: they are going after organizations that they have decided are not doing enough to secure their clients' data. They pose a threat similar to ransomware groups. This should be enough reason for organizations of any size to work with their IT teams in strengthening the business's overall security posture.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/30 Beware the smishing home delivery scams
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2022/05/30/beware-the-smish-home-delivery-scams-with-a-professional-feel/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Home delivery scams, where the crooks falsely apologise to you for not delivering your latest parcel, have been around for years.</p> <p>However, as we have unfortunately needed to say many times on Naked Security, these scams seem to have become steadily more professional-looking during the pandemic, as more and more people have got into the habit of ordering deliveries for everyday shopping instead of heading into stores.</p> <p>For example, here's a contemporary SMS-based scam (phishing that is kicked off by a text message, or SMS, is wryly known as <i>smishing</i>) that makes a good "picture story" of how these cybercrimes unfold.</p>

In this criminal campaign, the scammers were targeting a home delivery company in the UK called *Evri*.

Unfortunately, and perhaps entirely deliberately on the part of the criminals, “Evri” is a recent UK-specific rebrand of the German company “Hermes”, so that UK customers may very well still be getting used to the new look and feel of the rebranded website, and to the new domain name.

Officially, the company’s web presence is at evri.com, so these crooks have grabbed a domain of the form evri-xxxxxxx.com to make things seem believable:

By the way, the domain used in this attack was first registered just yesterday, probably for use in this scam only, and at the time of writing, the content was served up by a hosting company based in Moscow, Russia.

Hosting companies typically provide ready-to-go web server templates, complete with HTTPS certificates that put a padlock in the address bar, and even if the service provider is responsive to complaints and turns off the website within a day or two, the crooks may well have got everything they were after from their fake server already.

When we tried the URL in this scam, we routinely experienced HTTP 404 errors (*page not found*) when visiting from a regular browser, meaning that the website was alive and responding, but effectively ignoring our requests.

As soon as we used a mobile browser, however, as you are likely to do when receiving a link directly on your mobile phone, the site sprang to life....

....As you can see in the top left corner, underneath the popup asking for your postcode, the crooks have inserted a realistic Evri logo, even retaining the official text *The new Hermes* to “remind” visitors about the brand change.

You should baulk at the next page, of course, because delivery companies don’t ask for personal ID merely for parcel tracking purposes, but there are no obvious visual or spelling errors to warn you off:

Next, there’s a fake charge for a modest amount that doesn’t sound too much to lose if the transaction turns out to be fraudulent...

...except that the “redelivery charge” is there merely to give the the criminals an excuse to to ask for payment details:

If you put your credit card number and bank details into this page, you aren’t going to lose £1.45 (just under \$2)...

...you’re going to lose your personal details to the crooks, who will probably use your card or bank account details themselves for a much more ambitious scam, or will sell them on to other crooks who specialise in that aspect of the cybercrime “business sector”.

Finally, there’s a short delay while the site pretends to “verify” your payment, after which the bogus site sneakily transfers you to the real one, so things appear to have ended normally...

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HEADLINE	05/31 Hackers publish Australia medical records
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/88gwjv/hackers-have-stolen-a-very-large-batch-of-private-data-from-australias-disability-scheme
GIST	Hackers have obtained and published part of a “very large” batch of medical records and other sensitive information belonging to participants of Australia’s National Disability Insurance Scheme after breaching the scheme’s client management software last month.

The platform that fell victim to the breach is an Australian software provider called CTARS, and provides client management services to NDIS providers as well as the people living with disabilities they support.

A spokesperson for the company told VICE that staff became aware of the breach on May 15, before a sample of the data was bragged about on a 'deep web' forum.

As it stands, the breach has only affected NDIS participants whose providers use CTARS—not all participants of the scheme—who the company says can expect to be notified if their data has been compromised.

"In the interests of the privacy of our customers' clients and staff, and to reduce the risk of attempts by scammers to target our customers, we are not releasing details of the number of people who may have been impacted," the spokesman said.

The scope of the details lifted from the platform have been described by some privacy advocates as "galling". Among them are understood to be Medicare numbers, Tax File Numbers and "more than enough" to commit credit card fraud. So far, attempts to offer help to those impacted have been limited.

In the short term, though, the team at CTARS say they have engaged external cyber-security and forensic specialists to contain the hack.

The National Disability Insurance Agency, the federal agency tasked with administering Australia's disability scheme, told VICE through a spokesperson that it has been working with CTARS since the hack and that it takes the protection of participant data and information security "extremely seriously".

In response to questions about what the NDIA was doing to offer support and recourse to those who think they might have been affected, the agency deferred to the CTARS website, which has set up a community service support centre courtesy of Australia's national identity and cybersecurity community support service.

The incident has since been reported to both the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, and the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC). Digital rights advocates, though, said the breach comes to illustrate broader issues with the way the harmful mass publication of sensitive information like this are handled in Australia.

"I think it's important to highlight that we're not talking about some kind of abstract harm here—this kind of data breach puts vulnerable people at serious risk of identity theft, fraud, and scams," Samantha Floreani, a program lead at Digital Rights Watch Australia, told VICE.

"On top of that, finding out that your sensitive information may be on the dark web is very distressing and, frankly, super burdensome to have to navigate a long list of administrative tasks to protect yourself once you suspect your personal information may have been compromised."

She said it's worth noting that the NDIA and CTARS have likely done all that's legally required of them. The trouble is, she said, that the law isn't strong enough.

"This is not just an NDIA problem—breaches happen alarmingly often, both by government agencies and their contracted service providers. But when it happens, there is currently very little legal recourse available for people who have been affected," Floreani said.

"We need a statutory tort for serious breach of privacy so that people have the ability to exercise their rights and hold entities accountable. This proposal isn't new, it's been around for almost ten years," she said.

	<p>Floreani isn't alone in calling for it. The inclusion of a statutory tort—a legislative provision that would give victims of privacy breaches like this an avenue to claim a remedy or damages of some sort—has become central to sweeping discussion of Australia's ongoing review of the Privacy Act.</p> <p>Failing to offer some of Australia's most vulnerable communities legal recourse after falling victim to a hack of this volume only adds evidence to a mounting pile.</p> <p>"What I see when I look at the news of this breach, aside from the immense potential harm to NDIS participants, is the ongoing failure of our government to take privacy seriously," said Floreani, "and to create real, meaningful protections for our rights."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 As bitcoin falters, miners brace for a crash
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/bitcoin-mining-crisis/
GIST	<p>LAST YEAR, AS bitcoin's price rose as high as \$68,000, miners were having a blast. Their profits, according to some estimates, were hovering just under 90 percent, and many of them decided to expand their operations at a frantic pace, bracing for an even larger 2022 bonanza.</p> <p>That windfall has not come to pass. Over the past few months, cryptocurrency markets have slid, with bitcoin's price hovering at \$30,630 at the time of writing. At the same time, the price of electricity shot up across the world because of a bounce-back in demand and the war in Ukraine. That is a problem for bitcoin miners, who use energy-chugging mining computers, called ASICs, to coin cryptocurrency by solving complex mathematical problems. Energy can account for up to 90 to 95 percent of a miner's overhead, according to Bitfury CEO Valery Vavilov in an interview with Reuters in 2016.</p> <p>In some parts of Europe, energy rates have shot up so dramatically that mining one bitcoin can cost up to \$25,000, says Daniel Jogg, CEO of Enerhash, a company running blockchain data centers. "Some operations were running without profits," he says. Texas, a cryptocurrency mining hot spot, has been grappling with an intense heat wave that caused the price of energy to jump by 70 percent—from 10.6 cents to 18.4 cents per kilowatt hour—over the past twelve months. The US currently makes up 37.84 percent of global crypto-mining activity, according to the University of Cambridge, following a 2021 mining ban in previous crypto powerhouse China. "The problem now is the price of energy on a gross basis, but also the volatility in energy price," says Alex Brammer, vice president for business development at crypto-mining infrastructure company Luxor Mining. "It's really hard to model forward what energy prices are going to be."</p> <p>That problem is compounded by a growing number of miners joining the network since last summer, which in turn has reduced individual miners' outputs. In short, miners are paying more to mint fewer bitcoins, and their coins are less valuable. While miners are still turning a profit, it is shrinking, says Sam Doctor, chief strategy officer at digital asset investment bank BitOoda, who estimates margins are now in the range of 60 to 73 percent. "Even miners who are using newer mining rigs—which are comfortably profitable—are making less money than before," he says. Older ASICs from the S9 generation, which still constitute a third of mining rigs in use worldwide, are no longer profitable in most cases, Doctor adds. "Now with the price of energy going up, miners that don't have a fixed-price energy contract can get squeezed on both sides." Doctor says that most miners, including larger mining companies, don't have such contracts, because securing one requires "stronger credit" than most of them have at the moment.</p> <p>Despite the still eye-popping margins, miners are in a tough spot. Most publicly listed mining companies—including industry leaders Riot, Marathon, and Core Scientific—have seen their market capitalization plummet by well over 50 percent. Both Riot and Core Scientific have missed their bullish revenue estimates and have conservatively revised their expansion plans.</p> <p>The fear is that if these negative trends do not reverse, this might be just the start of an industry-wide malaise. In the two years before the crash, miners were scrambling to buy cartloads of ASICs to churn out more bitcoin. The epitome of this buying bonanza is Marathon—one of the top three miners in the US—</p>

which purchased [78,000 ASICs from manufacturer Bitmain in December 2021](#) for a record \$879 million; that came hot on the heels of [another purchase of 30,000 Bitmain ASICs](#) for \$120 million in August 2021. Marathon's [plan was to run 133,000 rigs](#) by the first half of 2022, but as of May the company had [only 36,830 operational ASICs](#), after facing installation snags, adverse weather events at [one of its facilities in Montana](#), and [delays securing an energy contract with Texas' power grid](#). The value of idle or still-to-be-delivered ASICs might soon fall below the price that Marathon—and other mining companies—paid for them near the peak of bitcoin's bull run, as ASIC prices are generally correlated with that of bitcoin.

Charlie Schumacher, a spokesperson for Marathon, says the company paid for most of its newer mining rigs "far below the current market rate"—except for last-generation rigs like the 78,000 it ordered in December. He says that Marathon's "asset-light model," by which it partners with hosting services rather than building its own infrastructure, protects the company from the issues the industry is experiencing.

"Many miners are struggling to pay for their machines because they first invested heavily in infrastructure, with the hope that they could then raise the money to pay for machines that would fill that infrastructure," Schumacher says. "We don't have to worry about paying to construct infrastructure before we pay for our miners."

Observers say that miners' ASIC-buying spree was mostly funded by debt. Doctor, while declining to name any specific company, says that "certain miners have unfunded expenses. They have ordered a whole bunch of machines, they paid a deposit, but they don't necessarily have the funding already secured, or they may be losing some of that funding to pay the second balance to receive the rigs." That burden alongside bitcoin price's slump and costlier energy could impact companies' bottom lines, says Jurica Bulovic, head of mining at Foundry, a lender to mining outfits. "Anyone who bought equipment at the height of the cycle when bitcoin's price was 65,000 and took a loan to do so—which is a lot of the industry—they are not cash-flow positive today," Bulovic says.

In the wake of the crypto crash, there are signs that miners need cash, and quickly— and given the current market sentiment they cannot just turn to investors for help. This month, Riot Blockchain, a major US miner, [raised \\$10 million](#) from the sale of 250 bitcoins (out of a trove of 6,320) to fund further expansion; two days later Marathon [announced it was considering](#) selling some of its bitcoins, albeit not "in the near term." That bucked a well-established tendency among miners to hold—in crypto parlance, "HODL" (a typo later reinterpreted as "hold on for dear life")—to their cryptocurrencies. The sell-off isn't restricted to bitcoin: Brammer says that Luxor Mining is receiving "frantic calls" from publicly traded companies trying to sell ASICs below book value. "We're starting to see fire sales," he says. That might further depress ASIC prices, even if Robert Van Kirk, managing director of mining equipment marketplace Kaboomracks, says that sellers "don't want to lower their pricing any more," despite tepid demand.

The question is whether that spiral will start to make lenders worried. In the past two years of prosperity, some mining companies have borrowed money against their bitcoin reserves, or even entered so-called ["equipment-backed debt"](#) agreements where the loan was collateralized with the mining rigs themselves. Now that the price of both bitcoin and ASICs is going down, that collateral has lost value. "If the miners are over-leveraged, the pain could trickle down to other parts of the industry. For example, lenders, given that the value of collateral has been dropping," says Bulovic. "Even if not every lender is the same, and not every loan is the same."

Talk of consolidation in the bitcoin mining industry and a wave of mergers and acquisitions has grown increasingly loud. "Over the next 12 to 18 months, there's going to be evidence coming out on which companies are run really well and are operationally efficient and have healthy levels of debt," says Brammer. "These companies will be resilient to very tight margins after miners get used to 100 percent margins—which are about to be squeezed down."

"Inside of our industry, we're seeing a lot of signs of stress right now."

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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/technology/supreme-court-blocks-texas-law-on-social-media-censorship/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — A divided Supreme Court has blocked a Texas law, championed by conservatives, that aimed to keep social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter from censoring users based on their viewpoints.</p> <p>The court voted in an unusual 5-4 alignment Tuesday to put the Texas law on hold, while a lawsuit plays out in lower courts.</p> <p>Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett voted to grant the emergency request from two technology industry groups that challenged the law in federal court.</p> <p>The majority provided no explanation for its decision, as is common in emergency matters on what is informally known as the court’s “shadow docket.”</p> <p>Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Elena Kagan and Neil Gorsuch would have allowed the law to remain in effect.</p> <p>In dissent, Alito wrote, “Social media platforms have transformed the way people communicate with each other and obtain news.”</p> <p>It’s not clear how the high court’s past First Amendment cases, many of which predate the internet age, apply to Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and other digital platforms, Alito wrote in an opinion joined by fellow conservatives Thomas and Gorsuch but not Kagan.</p> <p>The order follows a ruling last week by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that found a similar Florida law likely violates the First Amendment’s free speech protections.</p> <p>Republican elected officials in several states have backed laws like those enacted in Florida and Texas that sought to portray social media companies as generally liberal in outlook and hostile to ideas outside of that viewpoint, especially from the political right.</p> <p>The Texas law was initially blocked by a district judge, but then allowed to take effect by a panel of the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Experts: Iran disrupts internet access
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/experts-iran-disrupts-internet-tower-collapse-deaths-34-85081930
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Iran disrupted internet access to the outside world as angry demonstrators rallied over the collapse of a tower in the nation's southwest that has killed at least 36 people, experts said Tuesday as outrage and grief continued to grow.</p> <p>The disruption plunged the province into digital isolation, making it difficult for journalists to authenticate events on the ground and for activists to share footage and organize protests.</p> <p>It's a tactic the Iranian government has repeatedly employed during times of unrest, rights activists say, in a country where radio and television stations already are state-controlled and journalists face the threat of arrest.</p> <p>The internet interference in the oil-rich Khuzestan province started in early May, weeks before the fatal collapse, said Amir Rashidi, director of internet security and digital rights at Miaan Group, which focuses on digital security in the Middle East. The province, home to an ethnic Arab population that long has</p>

alleged discrimination, was a flashpoint in protests over the sinking economy and skyrocketing prices of food staples.

Disruptions then intensified in the area after the Metropol Building collapse last week, according to data shared by the Miaan Group.

The disaster ignited widespread anger in Abadan, where residents alleging government negligence gathered nightly at the site of the collapse to shout slogans against the Islamic Republic. Videos of the protests have circulated widely online, with some showing officers clubbing and firing tear gas at demonstrators.

The footage analyzed by The Associated Press corresponded to known features of Abadan, some 660 kilometers (410 miles) southwest of the capital, Tehran. The number of casualties and arrests remains unclear.

In response to the protests, Iranian authorities at times completely shut down the internet and other times allowed only tightly controlled use of a domestic Intranet, reported the Miaan Group.

During the day, authorities also appear to have restricted bandwidths to make it very difficult for people to share large files, such as video, without leaving Abadan altogether, said Mahsa Alimardani, a senior researcher at Article 19, an international organization that fights censorship.

Last Friday, as huge crowds took to the streets to chant against top officials, a digital barricade of sorts went up between Iran and the world, data showed. Only certain government-approved national websites could stream content but not websites based abroad.

“There has been a pattern that we’ve seen when it gets dark where Google isn’t working but the website of the Supreme Leader is working well,” Rashidi said.

The Iranian mission at the United Nations did not immediately respond to request for comment.

Meanwhile, rescue workers pulled three more bodies from the rubble Tuesday, bringing the death toll to 36 amid fears more people could be trapped in the ruins. Five of the victims were school-age children, the official IRNA news agency reported. An additional 37 people were injured in the collapse, with two still hospitalized.

Officials have blamed the building’s structural failure on shoddy construction practices, lax regulation and entrenched corruption, raising questions about the safety of similar towers in the earthquake-prone country. Authorities reported they evacuated residents from buildings near the disaster site out of fear of the remaining Metropol structure collapsing.

The rising political and economic pressures come as talks to restore Tehran’s tattered nuclear deal with world powers have hit a deadlock. Hostilities have simmered as Iran accelerates its nuclear program far beyond the limits of the nuclear deal and last week seized two Greek tankers on a key oil route through the Persian Gulf.

In a sign of those rising tensions, Iran’s Foreign Ministry sharply criticized the International Atomic Energy Agency on Tuesday over its quarterly report released the day before on Iran’s nuclear program.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh rebuked the report’s findings that Iran’s highly enriched uranium stockpile had increased by 18 times since the 2015 nuclear deal as “not fair and balanced.”

The U.N. nuclear watchdog also said that Iran has still failed to explain traces of uranium particles that IAEA inspectors found at former undeclared sites in the country — long a sore point between Iran and the agency despite a recent push for a resolution by June.

	<p>Khatibzadeh said the agency's statements “did not reflect the reality of talks between Iran and the agency.”</p> <p>“The agency should be watchful and not destroy the path we walked down, with difficulty,” he told reporters in Tehran.</p> <p>Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian addressed the stalled indirect negotiations with the United States over the collapsed nuclear deal, telling reporters he communicated Iranian concerns to Vice President Kamala Harris through a third party when they were in Munich earlier this year.</p> <p>Iran has repeatedly demanded guarantees that no future president could unilaterally abandon the agreement, as former President Donald Trump did in 2018. The White House has said it cannot make such a commitment.</p> <p>Amirabdollahian said he had asked the mediator to "tell Ms. Kamala Harris if a group of rebels are going to take over the White House, could you please let us know."</p> <p>“Even if rebels take over, they must be committed to international agreements,” Amirabdollahian said.</p> <p>The White House has not acknowledged any such message.</p> <p>In a recent interview with France’s Le Figaro newspaper, Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi said his country was “always glad to help” when asked if Muscat was hosting new secret talks between Iran and the U.S. Oman hosted the secret talks that led to the 2015 nuclear deal.</p> <p>“I am hopeful that we can achieve a new dynamic to reach an agreement,” he said. “It is in the interest of our region and the world.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 CISA: voting software vulnerable 16 states
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/2022-midterm-elections-technology-georgia-election-2020-a746b253f3404dbf794349df498c9542
GIST	<p>ATLANTA (AP) — Electronic voting machines from a leading vendor used in at least 16 states have software vulnerabilities that leave them susceptible to hacking if unaddressed, the nation’s leading cybersecurity agency says in an advisory sent to state election officials.</p> <p>The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, or CISA, said there is no evidence the flaws in the Dominion Voting Systems’ equipment have been exploited to alter election results. The advisory is based on testing by a prominent computer scientist and expert witness in a long-running lawsuit that is unrelated to false allegations of a stolen election pushed by former President Donald Trump after his 2020 election loss.</p> <p>The advisory, obtained by The Associated Press in advance of its expected Friday release, details nine vulnerabilities and suggests protective measures to prevent or detect their exploitation. Amid a swirl of misinformation and disinformation about elections, CISA seems to be trying to walk a line between not alarming the public and stressing the need for election officials to take action.</p> <p>CISA Executive Director Brandon Wales said in a statement that “states’ standard election security procedures would detect exploitation of these vulnerabilities and in many cases would prevent attempts entirely.” Yet the advisory seems to suggest states aren’t doing enough. It urges prompt mitigation measures, including both continued and enhanced “defensive measures to reduce the risk of exploitation of these vulnerabilities.” Those measures need to be applied ahead of every election, the advisory says, and it’s clear that’s not happening in all of the states that use the machines.</p> <p>University of Michigan computer scientist J. Alex Halderman, who wrote the report on which the advisory is based, has long argued that using digital technology to record votes is dangerous because computers</p>

are [inherently vulnerable](#) to hacking and thus require multiple safeguards that aren't uniformly followed. He and many other election security experts have insisted that using [hand-marked paper ballots](#) is the most secure method of voting and the only option that allows for meaningful post-election audits.

"These vulnerabilities, for the most part, are not ones that could be easily exploited by someone who walks in off the street, but they are things that we should worry could be exploited by sophisticated attackers, such as hostile nation states, or by election insiders, and they would carry very serious consequences," Halderman told the AP.

Concerns about possible meddling by election insiders were recently underscored with [the indictment of Mesa County Clerk Tina Peters](#) in Colorado, who has become a hero to election conspiracy theorists and is running to become her state's top election official. Data from the county's voting machines appeared on election conspiracy websites last summer shortly after Peters appeared at a symposium about the election organized by MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell. She was also [recently barred](#) from overseeing this year's election in her county.

One of the most serious vulnerabilities could allow malicious code to be spread from the election management system to machines throughout a jurisdiction, Halderman said. The vulnerability could be exploited by someone with physical access or by someone who is able to remotely infect other systems that are connected to the internet if election workers then use USB sticks to bring data from an infected system into the election management system.

Several other particularly worrisome vulnerabilities could allow an attacker to forge cards used in the machines by technicians, giving the attacker access to a machine that would allow the software to be changed, Halderman said.

"Attackers could then mark ballots inconsistently with voters' intent, alter recorded votes or even identify voters' secret ballots," Halderman said.

Halderman is an expert witness for the plaintiffs in a lawsuit originally filed in 2017 that targeted the outdated voting machines Georgia used at the time. The state bought the Dominion system in 2019, but the plaintiffs contend that the new system is also insecure. A 25,000-word report detailing Halderman's findings was filed under seal in federal court in Atlanta last July.

U.S. District Judge Amy Totenberg, who's overseeing the case, has expressed concern about [releasing the report](#), worrying about the potential for hacking and the misuse of sensitive election system information. She agreed in February that the report could be [shared with CISA](#), which promised to work with Halderman and Dominion to analyze potential vulnerabilities and then help jurisdictions that use the machines to test and apply any protections.

Halderman agrees that there's no evidence the vulnerabilities were exploited in the 2020 election. But that wasn't his mission, he said. He was looking for ways Dominion's Democracy Suite ImageCast X voting system could be compromised. The touchscreen voting machines can be configured as ballot-marking devices that produce a paper ballot or record votes electronically.

In a statement, Dominion defended the machines as "accurate and secure."

Dominion's systems have been unjustifiably maligned by people pushing the false narrative that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump. Incorrect and sometimes outrageous claims by high-profile Trump allies prompted the company to file defamation lawsuits. State and federal officials have repeatedly said there's no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election — and no evidence that Dominion equipment was manipulated to alter results.

Halderman said it's an "unfortunate coincidence" that the first vulnerabilities in polling place equipment reported to CISA affect Dominion machines.

“There are systemic problems with the way election equipment is developed, tested and certified, and I think it’s more likely than not that serious problems would be found in equipment from other vendors if they were subjected to the same kind of testing,” Halderman said.

In Georgia, the machines print a paper ballot that includes a barcode — known as a QR code — and a human-readable summary list reflecting the voter’s selections, and the votes are tallied by a scanner that reads the barcode.

“When barcodes are used to tabulate votes, they may be subject to attacks exploiting the listed vulnerabilities such that the barcode is inconsistent with the human-readable portion of the paper ballot,” the advisory says. To reduce this risk, the advisory recommends, the machines should be configured, where possible, to produce “traditional, full-face ballots, rather than summary ballots with QR codes.”

The affected machines are used by at least some voters in at least 16 states, and in most of those places they are used only for people who can’t physically fill out a paper ballot by hand, according to a voting equipment tracker maintained by watchdog Verified Voting. But in some places, including all of Georgia, almost all in-person voting is on the affected machines.

Georgia Deputy Secretary of State Gabriel Sterling said the CISA advisory and a separate report commissioned by Dominion recognize that “existing procedural safeguards make it extremely unlikely” that a bad actor could exploit the vulnerabilities identified by Halderman. He called Halderman’s claims “exaggerated.”

Dominion has told CISA that the vulnerabilities have been addressed in subsequent software versions, and the advisory says election officials should contact the company to determine which updates are needed. Halderman tested machines used in Georgia, and he said it’s not clear whether machines running other versions of the software share the same vulnerabilities.

Halderman said that as far as he knows, “no one but Dominion has had the opportunity to test their asserted fixes.”

To prevent or detect the exploitation of these vulnerabilities, the advisory’s recommendations include ensuring voting machines are secure and protected at all times; conducting rigorous pre- and post-election testing on the machines as well as post-election audits; and encouraging voters to verify the human-readable portion on printed ballots.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Email breach costs Portland \$1.4M
SOURCE	https://statescoop.com/portland-oregon-business-email-compromise/
GIST	<p>Officials in Portland, Oregon, said last week that the city recently lost \$1.4 million to fraudulent activity when a malicious actor gained access to a government email account.</p> <p>The city’s Office of Management and Finance said Friday that the “fraudulent financial transaction” occurred in late April, but was only detected May 17 when the same account attempted another transfer of funds. While officials have said little else about the incident, they said it does appear to stem from an email scam.</p> <p>“Preliminary evidence indicates that an unauthorized, outside entity gained access to a City of Portland email account to conduct this illegal activity,” a press release reads.</p> <p>The release goes on that the incident is under investigation by the FBI, U.S. Secret Service and the Portland Police Bureau. City officials also said that a cyber incident response team was “immediately activated” to address the phony payments.</p> <p>While ransomware garners most of the headlines on cyberthreats against local government and similarly sized organizations, business email compromise remains the most dominant form of digital threat against</p>

	<p>enterprises and individuals in the United States, accounting for nearly \$2.4 billion in losses last year, according to the FBI's most recent Internet Crime Report.</p> <p>The bureau last year also warned that BEC schemes are on the rise against state and local governments, with the widespread adoption of remote work often acting as an accelerant for scammers.</p> <p>“Rapid adoption of ad-hoc teleworking environments driven by the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the ease of BEC operability against SLTT government entities and vendors has exacerbated cybersecurity challenges,” the March 2021 alert read.</p> <p>Between 2018 and 2020, the bureau noted at the time, BEC payouts from local governments ranged between \$10,000 to as much as \$4 million. Last August, leaders in Peterborough, New Hampshire, said their local government paid \$2.3 million to a bogus account, with little hope of ever getting the money back — as of last December, the town's insurer had only covered \$125,000 of that loss.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 IS claims deadly attack east Congo
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-killing-15-east-congo-village-2022-05-31/
GIST	<p>CAIRO, May 31 (Reuters) - Islamic State on Tuesday claimed responsibility for an attack that killed at least 15 civilians in a village in northeast Democratic Republic of Congo on Sunday, the militant group said on an affiliated Telegram channel.</p> <p>A rights group and a local official said on Monday that fighters believed to be members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) stormed the village of Bulongo in North Kivu province after dark on Sunday, pillaging homes, murdering inhabitants that crossed their path, and setting fire to six vehicles.</p> <p>The ADF is a Ugandan militia that has been active in east Congo since the 1990s and killed scores of civilians, many in middle-of-the-night attacks carried out with machetes and hatchets. It pledged alliance to the Islamic State in 2019.</p> <p>Islamic State claimed its members killed nearly 20 Christians and set fire to six trucks in the attack using machine guns and returned back to their bases unhurt.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Judge raises sentence; attack on FBI agent
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/judge-in-new-york-hands-man-longer-sentence/2022/05/31/96035d32-de2d-11ec-a744-f4da26d516e8_story.html
GIST	<p>A federal judge on Tuesday increased her sentence for a New York City man who planned to join the Islamic State and attacked an FBI agent to 25 years, after a federal appeals court called the original 17-year sentence “shockingly low.”</p> <p>Fareed Mumuni, 27, pleaded guilty in 2017 to discussing plans to travel overseas to join the militant group and trying to stab an FBI agent after authorities arrived at his residence in the New York City borough of Staten Island in 2015 to execute a search warrant.</p> <p>The United States brands the Islamic State a foreign terrorist organization.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn successfully appealed Mumuni's 2018 sentence, with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit arguing that U.S. District Judge Margo Brodie had improperly second-guessed whether Mumuni truly planned to kill FBI Special Agent Kevin Coughlin, who survived the attack.</p>

	<p>“I got lucky,” Coughlin said in the sentencing hearing Tuesday.</p> <p>Mumuni told Coughlin he was sorry. “I can’t apologize enough for what I’ve done,” said Mumuni, the son of immigrants from Ghana who once interned as a paralegal at the Staten Island district attorney’s office and had been studying to be a social worker and working as a home health aide when he was recruited to ISIS.</p> <p>Prosecutors on Tuesday asked Brodie to sentence Mumuni to the 85 years recommended by federal guidelines.</p> <p>Anthony Ricco, a lawyer for Mumuni, urged Brodie to reduce the sentence, arguing that Mumuni had rehabilitated himself.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Germany convicts 5 Islamic extremists
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/islamic-extremists-convicted-of-membership-in-german-is-cell/2022/05/31/f9669158-e0dc-11ec-ae64-6b23e5155b62_story.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN — A court in Germany on Tuesday convicted five men for membership in a local cell of the Islamic State group that received orders from a leading IS figure in Afghanistan.</p> <p>The Duesseldorf regional court sentenced the Tajik nationals, aged 25 to 34, to lengthy prison terms.</p> <p>The longest sentence of nine years and six months was handed to Sunatullokh K., whose surname wasn’t released due to German privacy rules. He was also convicted of planning to kill a man who had made critical comments about Islam. The attack was foiled by authorities.</p> <p>The other men, identified as Muhammadali G., Azizjon B., Farhodshoh K. and Komron B., received prison sentences of between 44 months and 8.5 years for membership to a terrorist organization, with some also convicted of involvement in plans to carry out a contract killing in Albania that was later abandoned.</p> <p>Another man, Ravsan B., was convicted by the same court last year of membership in IS for co-founding the German cell and supporting two planned attacks. He was sentenced to seven years in prison.</p> <p>Prosecutors said the men honed their military skills in paintball games, and that participants in those included “other people from the Islamist scene” who were in contact with the gunman who killed four people in an attack in Vienna in November 2020. They also allegedly acquired components for an “unconventional” bomb.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors had sought prison terms of between four and 12 years for the men. Their lawyers had asked the court to acquit them.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	06/01 L.A. lifeguard’s pay tops \$500,000
SOURCE	https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/los-angeles-lifeguard-pay-tops-500000
GIST	<p>It pays to be a lifeguard in Los Angeles County. So much, in fact, that a government watchdog is sounding the alarm to taxpayers in the California county and beyond.</p> <p>An investigation by OpenTheBooks.com discovered that LA’s highest-paid ocean lifeguard, a captain named Daniel Douglas, raked in a total of \$510,283 in total compensation last year, nearly half of which –</p>

\$246,060 – was from overtime pay. Douglas' base salary is \$150,054, and he brought in another \$28,661 in "other pay" and \$85,508 in benefits to surpass the half-million-dollar mark.

Douglas is not the only high-earning lifeguard on the county's payroll. The No. 2 earner in 2021 was lifeguard chief Fernando Boiteux, who made \$463,517, followed by section chief Kenichi Ballew-Haskett at \$409,414. All told, 98 LA lifeguards made at least \$200,000 last year, and OpenTheBooks.com founder Adam Andrzejewski wrote in a substack post [explaining the breakdown](#) that "it's time we put Baywatch on pay watch."

Andrzejewski told [FOX Business](#), this "is an example of permanent government that isn't being changed at the ballot box. Even in extreme circumstances, where lifeguards make a half million dollars, the people are virtually powerless to reign in the misallocation of resources."

He said that it may not just be LA taxpayers footing the bill, either.

Andrzejewski pointed to the fact that lifeguards are considered first responders, a priority in the American Rescue Plan Act [passed by congressional Democrats](#) last year under President Biden, and claims Los Angeles received a \$1.9 billion "bailout" from the legislation.

"We don't know how much of that money on a fungible basis ends up in the pockets of lifeguards," Andrzejewski said, "but one of the reasons they can pay \$510,000 for a lifeguard is because of taxpayer money from working and middle class taxpayers and all of us from around the country – \$1.9 billion of the American Rescue Plan Act is [over there in Los Angeles County](#)."

Los Angeles County told FOX Business that there is a lot more to the story.

For starters, Daniel "Danny" Douglas, and other high-earning lifeguards listed by OpenTheBooks.com, serve on specialized teams that travel to other parts of the state and even the country to assist in emergencies such as wildfire disasters. Last year, Douglas alone served 114 days on a COVID incident management team, and 70 days on fire incident management teams on six separate fires in addition to his service as an ocean lifeguard.

"These are all in addition to his normal lifeguard responsibilities," the spokesperson said of Douglas. "So it's not like he's just sitting around at the beach with his toes in the sand collecting overtime. He's doing some major things on these incident teams, which are really essential in the structure of wildland firefighting. And, as we saw with the COVID response, [in] helping the communities."

For lifeguards' work on the special teams, the spokesperson said, LA County is reimbursed by both the state and federal government, and has been prior to the pandemic.

The county said in an official statement that in 2021, "the Los Angeles County Fire Department had approximately 166 full-time Ocean Lifeguards and 600 seasonal recurrent Ocean Lifeguards. All our lifeguards, including those in leadership positions, have taken on an enormous responsibility. They are responsible for protecting 72 miles of coastline, 10,526 square miles of open ocean waters, Catalina Island, and 1,686 square miles of Los Angeles County inland waterways."

"In that same year, we had over 50 million beachgoers and our lifeguards executed over 9,286 ocean rescues and responded to over 13,303 medical calls," the statement continues. "During large scale brush fires, our lifeguards take on additional responsibilities to work on specialized incident management teams to support firefighters all over the state – as they did in 2021 when wildfires burned an estimated 2,568,948 acres here in California. Additionally, our lifeguards were a critical part of the COVID-19 response efforts. The Lifeguard Division provided personnel, logistics, and incident management qualifications to support COVID-19 Testing and COVID-19 vaccinations all over the County of Los Angeles."

HEADLINE	06/01 'Biggest plant on Earth' off west Australia?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/01/what-the-hell-australian-scientists-discover-biggest-plant-on-earth-off-wa-coast
GIST	<p>About 4,500 years ago, a single seed – spawned from two different seagrass species – found itself nestled in a favourable spot somewhere in what is now known as Shark Bay, just off Australia’s west coast.</p> <p>Left to its own devices and relatively undisturbed by human hands, scientists have discovered that seed has grown to what is now believed to be the biggest plant anywhere on Earth, covering about 200 sq km (77 sq miles, or about 20,000 rugby fields, or just over three times the size of Manhattan island).</p> <p>The species – a <i>Posidonia australis</i>, also known as fibre-ball weed or ribbon weed – is commonly found along the southern coastlines of Australia.</p> <p>But when scientists started looking for genetic differences in ribbon weed across the bay, they came across a puzzle. Samples taken from sites that were 180km apart suggested there were not multiple specimens of <i>Posidonia australis</i>, but one single plant.</p> <p>“We thought ‘what the hell is going on here?’” said Dr Martin Breed, an ecologist at Flinders University. “We were completely stumped.”</p> <p>Student researcher Jane Edgeloe, of the University of Western Australia (UWA), said about 18,000 genetic markers were examined as they looked for variations in the species that might help them select specimens for use in restoration projects.</p> <p>But what they found instead was that the same plant had spread using rhizomes in the same way that a lawn can spread from its edges by sending out runners.</p> <p>“The existing 200 sq km of ribbon weed meadows appear to have expanded from a single, colonising seedling,” she said.</p> <p>The one plant now spreads out like a meadow, providing habitat for a huge array of marine species including turtles, dolphins, dugongs, crabs and fish.</p> <p>Ribbon weed rhizomes can grow up to 35cm a year and, using that rate, the authors of the research – published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B – estimate the plant will have needed at least 4,500 years to spread as far as it has.</p> <p>Dr Elizabeth Sinclair, a co-author of the research at UWA, said they hadn’t given the plant a nickname, and original samples – pulled from the seagrass meadow – originally had 116 different labels with GPS coordinates when they were stored in a deep freeze ready for genetic sampling.</p> <p>The plant has formed huge, dense meadows that in some areas stretch as far as the eye can see in all directions. The ribbons of the plant are only 10cm long in some places, but up to a metre in others.</p> <p>Conditions in Shark Bay itself are challenging. The plant has found a way to survive in areas where the salinity is double that elsewhere in the bay, and can thrive in water temperatures as cold as 15C and as hot as 30C.</p> <p>The seagrass plant’s survival appears to be linked, Sinclair said, to how it had held on to all the chromosomes from its two parents, giving it inbuilt genetic diversity.</p> <p>“Instead of getting half [of] its genes from mum and half from dad, it’s kept all of them,” she said.</p> <p>Sinclair and colleagues are still working through the secrets of the giant specimen, but she said it appears to be “largely sterile” and so has to rely on its own ability to grow, rather than disperse seeds.</p>

	<p>Breed said the fact the plant “doesn’t have sex” but had survived for so long was a puzzle.</p> <p>“Plants that don’t have sex tend to also have reduced genetic diversity, which they normally need when dealing with environmental change,” he said.</p> <p>Breed said they had detected some very subtle mutations in the plant’s genetics across the places it was growing that might also explain its extreme longevity.</p> <p>The size of the Shark Bay ribbon weed is about 20,000 hectares (49,000 acres) – making it much larger than a stand of quaking Aspen trees in Utah, often referred to as the world’s largest plant, covering 43 hectares.</p> <p>Associate professor Kathryn McMahon, of Edith Cowan University, was not involved in the Shark Bay research but is an expert on seagrass. She said the method used by the researchers gave her confidence they had identified one single specimen, which she said was “amazing”.</p> <p>Genetic studies of other seagrass species had estimated the plants could live for between 2,000 and 100,000 years, so McMahon said the estimate that the Shark Bay specimen was 4,500 years old fits into that range.</p> <p>“They have a versatile growth pattern which contributes to this long life span,” she said. “They can grow towards nutrient-rich patches to access the nutrient they need, or to gaps in the meadow where there is space for them to grow or away from stressful locations.</p> <p>“All of these characteristics mean that if they are in the right place they can persist over long periods of time.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Coast Guard first female service chief
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/us/politics/coast-guard-commandant-linda-fagan.html
GIST	<p>Adm. Linda L. Fagan will shatter one of the last glass ceilings in the military on Wednesday when she takes the oath as commandant of the Coast Guard and becomes the first female officer to lead a branch of the American armed forces.</p> <p>Admiral Fagan, who was previously the service’s second in command, graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1985, in just the sixth class that included women. She steadily rose through the ranks, serving at sea on an icebreaker, and ashore as a marine safety officer.</p> <p>It was not until much later in her career that she thought becoming commandant might even be possible.</p> <p>“A lot of people would say, ‘Oh yeah, I knew she was going to be an admiral,’ but I didn’t think about it,” Admiral Fagan recalled. “Even when I was first selected as an admiral you don’t think about it, and then all of a sudden you look around and you go, ‘Oh yeah, all right, I guess this is possible.’ ”</p> <p>“When I look up in the organization, at least just a couple years ago there was not a ton of diversity,” Admiral Fagan said in an interview. “Even still we don’t have the diversity we need at the senior leadership ranks. But as I look back, it’s all there and coming — certainly for women, and we still need to increase our number of underrepresented minority males.”</p> <p>She will be the 27th commandant of the service, which traces its roots back to the creation of the Revenue Cutter Service shortly after the Revolutionary War, and merged with the U.S. Life-Saving Service to become the Coast Guard in 1915.</p>

At Coast Guard headquarters in Washington last week, Admiral Fagan noted the historic significance of her achievement as she walked through a hall filled with portraits of her predecessors. She paused in front of a painting of Adm. Owen W. Siler, the 15th commandant of the service, in the 1970s.

“He was the commandant when the service academies were first integrated,” Admiral Fagan said.

Years later, Admiral Siler’s wife approached her at an event and said, “I just want to tell you how proud Si and I are of the women,” Admiral Fagan recalled.

When she entered the academy, the Coast Guard no longer had policies that prevented women from serving in any particular role or capacity, unlike other branches of the military at the time. But its fleet needed to be retrofitted with sleeping accommodations and bathroom facilities for women. Larger ships like icebreakers had numerous staterooms and bathrooms meant for officers, areas of which could be assigned to female officers immediately. Building permanent facilities for enlisted women on those ships, as well as on smaller cutters, would take time.

As the years passed, female officers of Admiral Fagan’s generation began taking command of small cutters at sea and working their way upward.

Once women had equal opportunities at sea, the main obstacle to reaching the commandant’s office was the number of years it took to gain enough experience for the job. When Admiral Fagan takes her seat among the Joint Chiefs, she will have served roughly the same amount of time as any of those seated around her.

The Pentagon’s top leadership jobs have been dominated by white men until recently. [Adm. Michelle Howard](#), now retired, in 2014 became the first woman to reach the four-star rank in the Navy. Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., who leads the Air Force, is the [first Black officer to become a service chief](#), and Lloyd J. Austin III, the secretary of defense, is the [first Black man to serve in that role](#). Lt. Gen. Michael E. Langley, recently nominated to lead the U.S. Africa Command, will become the [first Black four-star Marine Corps officer](#) if confirmed by the Senate.

“We’re getting past the ‘firsts,’” Admiral Fagan said. “I hope sometime soon we’re talking about the second female commandant, and the third female commandant, and that we’ll have a Black male commandant.”

“We, as a service, need to reflect the society that we serve, and creating opportunity for everyone in the service is important,” she added.

According to the Coast Guard, approximately 40 percent of the incoming class at its academy in New London, Conn., will be women, while across the entire force just 15 percent of personnel are female.

Admiral Fagan can count on one hand the number of women who have become active-duty admirals in the Coast Guard, and she knows them by name. Among them is Vice Adm. Vivien S. Crea, who was commissioned from the first Officer Candidate School class to include women, rose to a three-star rank, and, like Admiral Fagan, served as vice commandant of the Coast Guard, from 2006 to 2009.

One of the last major gender-based obstacles in the armed forces was removed in 2015, when the Obama administration dropped policies that prevented women from serving in combat roles.

“Diverse work teams just outperform nondiverse work teams,” Admiral Fagan said. “We need to ensure that there are no barriers to service for those that are service minded and meet the requirements of service.”

Admiral Fagan said that by the time one of her daughters had entered the service, women were represented in most senior positions. Her daughter is now a lieutenant.

As commandant, Admiral Fagan said she would work to overhaul the service's "up or out" system, in which people generally are either promoted or eventually forced to leave — a practice that she noted was common in all branches of the armed forces. Among her goals will be finding ways to allow Coast Guardsmen to take time away from the service toward the middle of their careers, such as when they decide to start families.

She described the issue as gender neutral. "Policies that make it easier for women to be retained at that mid-grade point make it easier for men to be retained at that point," she said.

Her first tour as an ensign took her to Seattle for an assignment aboard an icebreaker, the Polar Star. She was the only woman to serve on the ship during her two-year tour, during which she qualified for one of the service's most dangerous jobs: cutting channels through packed sea ice near both the North and South Poles.

Her first commanding officer from her tour on the Polar Star, Wade Moncrief, plans to be in the audience at her ceremony on Wednesday.

"I'm pretty excited about it," Mr. Moncrief, 81, said in an interview, noting that Admiral Fagan had ably served in some of the most challenging conditions a mariner could face.

"I think everything went pretty well," he said of integrating his ship in 1985 with her arrival. "I think the crew understood what it was about, that she was an officer just like the rest were and had the same authority, and they operated that way."

Mr. Moncrief, who was commissioned in 1962 and retired as a captain in 1988, stayed in touch with his former shipmate and attended a previous ceremony when Admiral Fagan took command of the Coast Guard's Pacific Region.

"You know women wouldn't be getting these jobs if they didn't perform well and they weren't qualified for them," he said. "So yes, they're breaking the ceiling, but they've earned it."

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HEADLINE	05/31 Above-average snow in Cascade Mountains
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/mountain-snow-cascade-mountains-snowpack/281-02acc402-f5fe-463c-a6f7-f7c000e37f69
GIST	<p>SNOQUALMIE PASS, Wash. — Above-average mountain snow heading into June is creating a unique situation in the Cascade Mountains for people looking to adventure.</p> <p>It could be some time before trails appear and the ground dries out. For most of the state snowpack measurements are still well over 100 percent for this time of year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.</p> <p>The Leavenworth Wilderness and Climbing Rangers traveled to the core of the Enchantments over Memorial Day Weekend. The crew said measurements at the bottom were around three feet and at the top of Asgard Pass snow was measured at eight feet deep.</p> <p>"Do not come here to do the through-hike expecting summer conditions until well into the summer months," the rangers wrote on Facebook.</p> <p>In that same post, they said they found two lost hikers in whiteout conditions.</p> <p>"Without a map, no method of boiling water, soaked shoes, and cotton pants. The individuals had to spend an unexpected night out supported by two rangers. Please plan ahead and come prepared. It is not</p>

	<p>responsible to put rangers or search and rescue members in danger for your poor judgment and decision making," wrote the Leavenworth Wilderness and Climbing Rangers.</p> <p>The snow-covered terrane means a rare, extended season at Crystal Mountain.</p> <p>"That mid and upper mountain area is still fully packed with snow," said Emma Brice with Crystal Mountain.</p> <p>Brice said Crystal Mountain has its Green Valley Lift and Mount Rainier Gondola running. She believes Crystal is one of only eight spots in the U.S. still open.</p> <p>"To get all this snow late in the season is great for fire hazards for summer, but also just gives people more opportunity to ski in the spring," said Brice.</p> <p>It's an opportunity that's not too common. It's only the fifth time in two decades the resort has run past May. There's a possibility the resort remains open longer. In 2011 Crystal Mountains was open until July 16.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	06/01 FBI: new data on police use-of-force
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/fbi-police-use-of-force-public-distrust
GIST	<p>The FBI on Tuesday released new data on police use of force against civilians in 2021.</p> <p>The agency also recently released additional details on the 73 officers were feloniously killed in the line of duty in 2021 — nearly half of whom did not engage with their assailants before being attacked.</p> <p>More than 8,000 agencies reported use-of-force data in 2021 — a 10% increase compared to 2020. So far this year, 6,773 agencies have submitted use-of-force data to the FBI.</p> <p>Use-of-force data</p> <p>Last year, more than half of use-of-force incidents submitted to the FBI resulted in serious bodily injury of a person, more than 33% caused the death of a person, and 17% involved the discharge of a firearm at or in the direction of a person, according to the bureau.</p> <p>Of the use-of-force incidents, nearly 57% involved officers responding to unlawful or suspicious activities, 11% stemmed from traffic stops, 10% resulted from search warrants or court order services, nearly 8% came from welfare checks, 3% were the result of routine patrols, nearly 3% involved follow-up investigations, and about 7% were unknown "and unlikely to ever be known," according to the FBI.</p> <p>"In use-of-force incidents, officers most often encountered individuals who failed to comply with verbal commands or other types of passive resistance," the FBI said in a Tuesday press release. "Other types of resistance encountered included displaying a weapon at an officer or another individual, attempting to escape or flee custody, using a firearm against an officer or another individual, or resisting being handcuffed or arrested."</p> <p>More than 1,100 civilians were killed by police officers in 2021, according to Mapping Police Violence, which tracks individuals killed by officers across the U.S.</p> <p>LEOKA data</p> <p>The number of officers feloniously killed last year represents a 20-year high as murder rates in major U.S. cities reached similar records. The FBI defines a felonious killing as an incident "in which an officer,</p>

while engaged in or on account of the performance of their official duties, was fatally injured as a direct result of a willful and intentional act by an offender."

Updated information released by the FBI on May 9, however, hones in on more specifics and demographics for those officers attacked last year.

The average age of the officers feloniously killed in 2021 was 39, and the average length of service with a law enforcement agency was 12 years. Of those who died, 68 were male and five were female. Sixty victims were white, and nine were Black. Race was not reported for four victims, FBI data shows.

Of the 73 officers the FBI counted, 24 were killed in unprovoked attacks, meaning the fatal attacks came out of nowhere, or with no prior warning.

"We have got to do a better job in this profession, and we need to help from the community to get to a better job of fighting the false narrative that police officers are roaming the streets, murdering our citizens, murdering unarmed black men, all that," Betsy Brantner Smith, spokesperson for the National Police Association and a 29-year police veteran who currently trains officers, told Fox News Digital.

She added that "one of the reasons that we're seeing this huge uptick in officer ambushes, unprovoked attacks, is because there is this pervasive false information in the media, by activists, by some politicians, that police officers are a danger to the community." That, she said, is one of the "biggest, most ignored officer safety components in this country right now."

In one example of an officer killed in an unprovoked attack last year, 39-year-old [Baltimore Police Department Officer Keona Holley](#) was shot in the head in December 1:35 a.m. while parked in her police vehicle during an overnight shift in the high-crime area of Curtis Bay. She left behind four children.

Of the remaining 73 officers who were not killed in unprovoked attacks, nine died as a result of investigative law enforcement activities — four that involved surveillance, two that involved traffic stops, one that responded to an active shooter, one involved in an undercover investigation and another investigating a wanted person.

Eight officers were ambushed after being entrapped or at the receiving end of a premeditated attack. Eight were involved in vehicular or foot pursuits. Seven were responding to disturbances. Six were involved in tactical situations. Four were involved in arrests. Two were responding to active crimes, including an active shooter and an assault.

The remaining officers were killed by assisting law enforcement officers, attempting to serve a court order, responding to a report of a crime, or deploying equipment. One officer was out of service, according to the FBI.

Offender data

Most (61) of those killed were shot with firearms, the majority of which were handguns. The type of firearm used was not reported in 31 instances. Seven officers fired their weapons, and four attempted to fire their weapons before being killed. Thirty of the 73 officers were wearing body armor.

Sixty-six offenders identified in connection to the 73 felonious officer deaths had an average age of 31. The majority (53) were male. Twenty offenders were White and 11 were Black, though race was not listed for 35 offenders, the FBI data shows.

Nine alleged offenders were "under judicial supervision" at the time of the attacks, and 20 were listed as prior offenders.

"We have seen this time and time and time and time again — people with these long rap sheets, and we're seeing it in the killings and the attacks on law enforcement officers," Brantner-Smith said of the data. "They either don't go to jail or they don't stay in jail."

Questions after Floyd, Uvalde

A distrust in law enforcement and outcry for more police accountability has followed agencies since the May 25, 2020, murder of George Floyd at the hands of ex-Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin. Since then, many states and local jurisdictions have implemented measures to strengthen accountability, improve transparency and reduce the number of officer-involved shootings and use-of-force incidents.

At the time, left and right-leaning politicians generally disagreed over measures that included drastically decreasing police budgets in an effort to reduce these issues.

Two years later, elected officials on both sides of the political aisle recently expressed a sense of distrust in officers following what some have criticized as a bungled response to the May 24 school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, that left 19 fourth-grade students and two teachers dead following reports that officers waited about 40 minutes to enter the school building since the first 911 call was placed.

Reports also alleged that officers tased and arrested parents waiting outside Robb Elementary as they demanded to get their children out of the building. Eventually, federal law enforcement officers made the call to enter the school and shoot the gunman, according to Texas authorities.

"As more information comes out, it becomes worse and worse what those parents had to endure that day, and in all the years ahead when they think about it ... is beyond my words to express," former FBI criminal profiler Mary Ellen O'Toole told Fox News Digital.

She continued: "It is a parent's natural reaction to save their child — no matter what. That day those parents were prevented from acting in a way that any parent would save their child at the risk of their own lives. ... The parents' inability to get to their kids that morning, will haunt them forever."

O'Toole called the Uvalde Police Department's response to the scene "extremely concerning and baffling."

"I try and understand how anyone can stand outside that classroom and listen to those little children who might have been crying and begging for help, and in my mind, there is nothing that could have been more important than getting in there ASAP and getting those children out of there and stopping the shooter," she said.

O'Toole added, however, that this is not a matter of the public's general trust in law enforcement but the lack of leadership and direction in a particular agency.

Brantner Smith noted that there "is still so much we do not know" about the shooting.

"What we do know is that the shooter was an incredibly disturbed 18-year-old who was known to threaten teen girls with violent sexual assault, was very vocal about shooting up a school, had dropped out of high school after nearly a year of COVID isolation, and was videotaped laughing with a bag of bloody pet cats. This young man should have been well known to law enforcement and to the community; the ongoing investigation should reveal just how well known he was," she said.

"[W]hatever mistakes were made, we urge our politicians, our media and our citizens not to condemn an entire profession for the actions of one man," she added.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Yakima PD chief: violence against police
SOURCE	https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/crime_and_courts/monday-nights-shooting-part-of-trend-of-violence-against-police-yakima-police-chief-says/article_7f01536b-0910-5f55-8a52-2d7384d51a48.html
GIST	Just before midnight Monday, Yakima police spotted a stolen car in the parking lot of a North First Street convenience store.

A man and woman were standing outside the car in the 1200 block of North First Street when police approached. The man fired shots at police as he ran across North First Street, Chief Matt Murray said.

[Police returned fire](#) and the 30-year-old Yakima man kept running despite being shot multiple times. He was cornered in a row of mobile homes near Bartlett Street, where he dropped to the ground. He wouldn't show his hands when ordered by police, Murray said.

Police then used a non-lethal shotgun that fires beanbags in hopes of getting the man to comply, but he refused. A police K9 was deployed and bit and held the man until police arrested him, Murray said.

The man is now in serious condition at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, police said.

This is the fourth time within a year police and corrections officers have been violently confronted by suspects in Yakima County, Murray said in a news conference several hours after the shooting.

"There's an alarming trend of violence against police officers," he said. "So please know that your police officers are protecting you and are being threatened in doing so."

In April, [police shot a domestic violence suspect](#) when he pointed a gun at them in an armed standoff near North 18th Street and Jerome Avenue.

[A slow-speed chase](#) in January ended with police shooting a suspect in the shoulder when he pointed a shotgun at them near the intersection of North Fifth Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

In June 2021 — nearly a year ago — [police shot a man](#) near North First and G streets after he fired on them. A police officer was shot in the ankle.

None of the cases resulted in fatalities.

But that's not all the violence against officers within the past year. In another incident Monday night, a woman began fighting with an officer who responded to a domestic call in Zillah, Murray said.

"His intent was to arrest her, and her intent was to fight with a police officer," Murray said.

In November 2021, a corrections officer was badly assaulted by inmates at the Yakima city jail.

No officers were harmed in Monday night's shooting.

Murray said this is the largest streak of violence against police officers he's seen in the county since coming to the department in 2019.

"We're responding to the decisions and actions of someone else," Murray said. "I think it's terrible that people have guns and are doing bad things with them."

The names of the two officers involved in Tuesday morning's shooting have yet to be released. They've been placed on paid leave, which is standard procedure, while an independent investigation is conducted.

The investigation is being conducted by the Yakima Valley Special Investigative Unit, which is composed of officers from departments across the county including the Washington State Patrol.

Murray said the officers acted professionally by deploying non-lethal methods after cornering the man and then providing CPR once the threat was gone.

"They may have saved his life," Murray said.

	Police are still searching for the woman who was with the man, he said.
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HEADLINE	06/01 Europol busts money laundering network
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/euro-cops-money-laundering/
GIST	<p>Hungarian police are this week claiming to have dismantled a major organized crime gang responsible for laundering tens of millions of euros.</p> <p>Supported by Europol, the Budapest Metropolitan Police raided 24 homes in early May, interrogating 16 suspects and formally arresting five, who have now been placed in pre-trial custody.</p> <p>Officers also seized funds in 32 countries across Europe, Australia and South America, along with €140,000 (\$150,000) in cash, a “high-end vehicle,” large quantities of mobile phones, SIM cards and storage devices, payment cards, weapons and ammunition, and jewellery.</p> <p>At least 44 individuals are thought to have been involved in the money laundering scheme, 10 of whom organized the operation and the remainder acting as mules who used their accounts to withdraw and transfer funds.</p> <p>Thought to have been active since September 2020, the network has been traced to at least €44m (\$47m) in laundered funds, with a further €5m (\$5.4m) identified as coming from criminal activity such as fraud.</p> <p>“The investigation uncovered that the members of the criminal network established a number of companies with no meaningful economic activities, and purchased others with the use of strawmen,” Europol explained.</p> <p>“The suspects opened bank accounts in the name of these companies to be used in a chain within a money laundering scheme. The bank accounts received transfers from other accounts based in different countries; these assets usually originated from invoice fraud or cryptocurrency-related swindling. The sums would then be transferred forward to other accounts to conceal the identity of the owners of these funds.”</p> <p>The news follows the arrest of 1800 suspected money mules in Europe last December, in an operation which police claimed helped to prevent losses of €70m (\$79m).</p> <p>However, such occasional wins for law enforcement have done little to impact an underground industry thought to be worth as much as 5% of global GDP.</p> <p>Law enforcement agencies have previously warned that pandemic-related economic strife forced many into acting as money mules.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Cambodia sharp rise ketamine seizures
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/xqde9j/ketamine-seizures-in-cambodia-rise
GIST	<p>Throughout the course of 2021, authorities seized a record 2.7 tonnes of ketamine within the borders of Cambodia—almost 15 times the amount seized within the country over the previous five years combined.</p> <p>The sharp uptick in seizures was revealed in a report published by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on Monday, which noted that Cambodia’s 2.7 tonnes of ket accounted for about half of Southeast Asia’s total. By comparison, in 2020, authorities seized just 112.5 kilograms of the drug; in 2016, they seized a little over a kilo.</p> <p>“The non-medical use of ketamine from clandestine manufacture remains of concern in the region,” the authors of the report noted. “In 2021, the total amount of ketamine seized in East and Southeast Asia reached nearly 10.3 tonnes.”</p>

While much of the country's illicit drug supply is typically thought to flow south from the Golden Triangle—a notorious wellspring for the world's illegal drug trade spanning the borders of Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand—UNODC experts believe that most of the sudden abundance of ketamine can be attributed to the illicit manufacture of the substance inside Cambodia itself.

“Ketamine continues to be manufactured in the Golden Triangle. However, Cambodia has been increasingly targeted for illicit synthetic drug production, not only for methamphetamine and ‘ecstasy,’ but ketamine as well,” the report revealed.

These figures come just days after Cambodia's Anti-Drug Department launched [twin drug raids](#) in Phnom Penh and Kampong Speu, cracking down on a secret drug processing laboratory, arresting four Taiwanese nationals, and confiscating more than 1,400 kilograms of synthetic substances. The seized materials included 40 kilograms of ketamine, 1,425 kilograms of ketamine mixture, 0.9 grams of methamphetamine tablets, and 11 tonnes of chemical compound.

The UNODC report also indicated other worrisome trends in the East and Southeast Asian region, including the continued expansion of synthetic drugs trafficking as a whole, and the record seizure of more than one billion methamphetamine tablets—otherwise known as yaba, or “crazy pills.”

Speaking to VICE World News in December, Jeremy Douglas, Southeast Asia regional representative for the UNODC, [explained](#) that the noticeable uptick in drug trafficking activity across Asia can, in many cases, be traced back to the February 2021 military coup within Myanmar, one of the world's biggest producers of illegal synthetic drugs.

The fallout from the coup has turned the nation on its head, diverting authorities' attention toward matters of civil unrest and rending open cracks in the country's border security. As a result, huge quantities of drugs that previously would have been caught at the source are now flowing through increasingly porous sections of the border and into the lucrative markets of Asia-Pacific.

“Conditions on the ground are basically perfect for traffickers,” Douglas said at the time.

Hong Kong also saw a significant increase of ketamine seized in 2021, according to the report, with authorities there confiscating 3.2 tonnes of the drug—almost sevenfold the amount seized the year prior.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Sweden: neo-Nazi mass murder plot foiled
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3va9g/sweden-neo-nazi-mass-murder-plot-arrest
GIST	<p>An alleged neo-Nazi in Sweden who used mass-murderer Anders Breivik as an avatar online and ruminated on how killing children can be moral was arrested with bomb-making material that could have been used to kill hundreds.</p> <p>Police arrested Jim Holmgren, 25, on November 4, 2021, at his small farm home outside of Falköping, Sweden, and Swedish authorities announced a bevy of weapons charges against him last Friday. He wasn't, however, charged with terrorism, since his alleged target remains unknown.</p> <p>According to court documents provided to VICE News, investigators found a revolver, modified high powered air rifles, ingredients to make powerful explosives, and neo-Nazi literature strewn about his home. Holmgren, who's now awaiting trial, was also allegedly involved with a Scandinavian neo-Nazi group and drew inspiration from neo-Nazis like Atomwaffen Division, an infamous accelerationist group connected to several murders.</p> <p>Police found five documents allegedly written by Holmgren about his plan, one of which they characterized as a manifesto. One of the documents outlined why it's morally just for neo-Nazis to kill children much like Breivik did in 2011 when he murdered 77 people, mostly children. In another, Holmgren chastised neo-Nazi groups for not being willing to commit acts of mass murder to further the cause, according to court documents.</p>

The documents indicate that he was still in the “planning” phase and had yet to choose a target, some ideas were suggested. Among the possibilities were a power plant, the police chief in Gothenburg, Sweden, or school children.

"If the crime had been completed, it would have been serious," the charging documents read, "because the preparation was intended to cause a powerful explosion in a densely populated area, at buildings of special importance and/or in an area where people gather or stay."

Upon searching the farmhouse where he lived, police also found it to be “not a normal environment.”

Photos of the home included in the charging documents show an environment more like a scene from Fight Club or a meth lab than a home. Strewn across the place were destroyed pots, pans and scientific equipment police allege were used for attempted bomb production, a revolver, body armor, replica weapons, empty shells for creating ammunition, knives, air rifles, and 3D-printed weapon parts as well as the printer which created them. Police said Holmgren seemed to be in the process of “modifying” the weapons.

Holmgren wasn't allowed to have a gun license because of his affiliation with a neo-Nazi group and had assaulted a woman during a neo-Nazi rally once before, according to Swedish media outlets that first reported the court documents.

Across the Atlantic, in Buffalo, New York, a man with a racist ideology was able to get his hands on an AR-15 and used it to kill 10 people while he live streamed two weeks ago. The man should have been caught by the red flag laws in New York but fell through the cracks, like so many others. Just last week another 18-year-old with violent tendencies used a similar rifle to slaughter 21 people, including 19 children, in a Texas elementary school.

While Holmgren did have a revolver, high-powered air-rifles and knives simply cannot cause the carnage an AR-15 can, although they can still do immense damage.

Investigators also found chemicals and books used for bomb production just left open around the house. And in a shed next to his home sat 50 tons of ingredients that could be used to make a powerful explosive, for which he had previously looked up the recipe online, according to the court documents. A nearby farmer owned some of the chemicals but stored them in a barn next to Holmgren's home.

The suspect's computer was flush with neo-Nazi literature and screeds written by previous Nazi killers, and his alleged plot was going to follow a chilling outline that many of them have used. To start, police found a helmet fixed with a Go-Pro. That, alongside a manifesto, led them to believe he was planning to livestream his attack much like the Christchurch shooter or, more recently, the Buffalo shooter..

While police say he lived a secluded life and seemed to be planning a "lone-wolf attack," the suspect was extremely active in online forums where, where he posted using avatars of Brevik, Ted Kaczynski, and other mass murderers, according to court documents. On one 3D-printed weapon forum, he allegedly solicited advice for bomb-making and posted about mass murders and discussed execution videos on others. On Telegram, a chat app beloved by the extreme-right for its lax moderation, he allegedly downloaded numerous manuals to aid in mass killings and neo-Nazi literature.

Holmgren was previously associated with the Nordic Resistance Movement, a Scandinavian neo-Nazi group, from 2015 to 2018. In his home, police said they found leaflets, a large banner featuring the group's name, templates that would allow him to spray paint the group's logo quickly, and several books relating to its ideology in his home. The books in the home include violent and racist novels written by the founder of Iron March—an infamous and influential neo-Nazi forum—as well as manuals to create C4, the Anarchists Cookbook, and a book urging neo-Nazis to take violent action against the system, which several mass murderers have cited in the past.

	Like many other neo-Nazis, the suspect appears to have had an obsession with memes.
	“A significant part of the images that Holmgren has saved on his desk is propaganda for the Atomwaffen Division, right-wing extremist memes or propaganda,” the charging documents reads. “The images call for violence or to accelerate the collapse of society and glorify the Islamic State. Many of the calls for violence are directed at the state and government officials.”
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HEADLINE	05/31 Uvalde faces many days mourning
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/us/uvalde-victims-funerals.html
GIST	<p>UVALDE, Texas — Amerie Jo Garza, 10, a jokester who made the honor roll. Tuesday, 2 p.m.</p> <p>Maite Yuleana Rodriguez, 10, who excelled in school and learned how to sew from YouTube videos. Tuesday, 7 p.m.</p> <p>Irma Garcia, 48, and Joe Garcia, 50, the parents of Lyliana, Alysandra, Cristian and Jose. Wednesday, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Jose Manuel Flores Jr., 10, called Josecito and Baby Jose, who collected toy trucks and played Little League. Wednesday, 2 p.m.</p> <p>A week after a gunman stormed into Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, funerals began on Tuesday for the 19 young students and two teachers killed — as well as the husband of a victim whose fatal heart attack was attributed by his relatives to his overwhelming grief. Stretching into mid-June, the coming days will be packed with services, visitations, rosaries and burials, memorializing each of the victims whose deaths are the sum of a community’s agonizing loss.</p> <p>The Rev. Eduardo Morales will preside over several funerals, each one requiring him to sit down with relatives and craft sermons that celebrate the young lives cut short. On some days, parents will bury children and also mourn their classmates and friends.</p> <p>“We are not here to celebrate her death,” Father Morales, the pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, told the mourners who filled the simple church on Tuesday for Amerie Jo Garza’s funeral Mass, expressing a sentiment that he said he would repeat at every funeral in the coming days, including one on Wednesday, another on Friday and one next Monday, if not more. “We are here to celebrate her life.”</p> <p>“Do not allow her death and this tragedy,” he went on, “to define who she is.”</p> <p>Uvalde has already been grieving for days, with neighbors hugging and lighting candles at public vigils and memorials — gripped by anguish after so much loss and the sense that the attack had altered the trajectory of an entire community.</p> <p>Now, the mourning has evolved into something more individualized.</p> <p>It has come with constant reminders of the squandered potential: the small coffins, one with a dinosaur on it, another with a Superman logo, a third with pink handles and a picture of a child doing a TikTok dance.</p> <p>Many of the remembrances have acknowledged young lives with lofty ambitions: Maite Rodriguez wanted to go to Texas A&M University’s campus in Corpus Christi and study to become a marine biologist. Alexandria Aniyah Rubio, known as Lexi, told her parents she wanted to be a lawyer.</p> <p>The aftermath of mass violence has a kind of bleak rhythm, one that plays out across the country after deadly attacks. In Texas alone, there have been mass shootings in recent years at a church in Sutherland Springs, a small town on the other side of San Antonio; a Walmart in El Paso; and a high school in Santa Fe, near Houston.</p>

Already, there has been a shift in Uvalde, a city of 15,000 people in the scrubby, windblown stretch west of San Antonio.

Soon after the shooting, while Uvalde was still in the clutches of shock, the city was packed with law enforcement agencies, elected officials and the news media, with journalists representing news organizations from around the world.

The attention brought its own hassles and hardships. But it also brought a surge of support. One online fund-raiser for the children of Irma Garcia, a teacher who was killed in the shooting, and her husband collected more than \$2.7 million — far eclipsing the original goal of \$10,000.

For some, the notice has also been reassuring in less tangible ways.

“This is a little town — it’s a city, but it’s little,” Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio said of Uvalde, which is part of his diocese. He said it was a source of comfort for residents to know that people far from Uvalde knew of their community’s plight and had sympathy for them. “The eyes of the world were on their home,” he added.

The community is still grappling with the immediate aftermath: Gov. Greg Abbott, who was among the officials to visit, said on Tuesday that he had issued a disaster declaration for Uvalde, which mobilizes more state and local resources for the city.

And as state law enforcement officials continued their investigation into why police officers had delayed entering a classroom where the gunman was locked in with students, they said on Tuesday that the chief of the school district’s Police Department, Pete Arredondo, had not made himself available for a follow-up interview by investigators.

Still, a week after the shooting, the outside attention has started to diminish. The memorials have become less crowded. On the streets, there are fewer reporters, cameras and vehicles emblazoned with the logos of news outlets.

Some are already contemplating the arduous road ahead, unsure of what kind of support Uvalde will ultimately need and for how long, particularly the children who are now growing up in the shadow of devastation.

Students are just now beginning their summer break from school, but parents are already contemplating how to help their children navigate their grief over the summer months and feel safe and ready to return to school, come fall.

But at the moment, much of Uvalde is wrestling with a void that has emerged: the nearly two dozen people who have died.

Sacred Heart, the parish that has been an anchor for Uvalde’s Catholic community for generations, has been a gathering place in the days since the attack, holding special Masses and vigils, as well as counseling services.

On Tuesday, the church was filled again as a choir sang a hymn based on the Prayer of St. Francis — “make me a channel of your peace.” Many attending Amerie’s funeral dressed in shades of lilac and lavender. Others wore work uniforms, stepping away from their jobs to take time to pray and cry.

Her death had compounded a string of loss for a family that had relatives die from the coronavirus pandemic.

Still, Father Morales — a native of Uvalde who returned six years ago to lead Sacred Heart — encouraged those who mourned her to make a choice, however tough it might be: Celebrate her life. Take to heart that her spirit and her legacy endure. “Allow her to be with us,” he said.

	<p>Amerie was a social girl, her family said. She was a good student, but she loved lunchtime and recess, when she could spend time with her friends. She also enjoyed expressing herself through art. In her obituary, her family wrote, “A protector of her brother and as we now know her classmates.”</p> <p>“You raised a beautiful, loving, caring little girl,” Father Morales said.</p> <p>As the Mass ended, he prayed over her coffin.</p> <p>“In peace let us take our sister to her place of rest,” he said. “May the angels lead you into paradise.”</p> <p>The choir, accompanied by a piano and violin, began to sing, its hymn ushering Amerie to that place of rest, her relatives on to navigate their grief and the priest to many more days of imploring weary mourners to celebrate those who had been taken from them.</p> <p>“If you are passing through the raging waters in the sea, you shall not drown,” the choir sang as the crowd filed from the church. Many of the mourners had tears in their eyes.</p> <p>“If you walk amid the burning flames, you shall not be harmed,” the singers continued. “And if you stand before the power of hell, and death is at your side, know that I am with you through it all.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Police botch school shooting response?
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/did-police-botch-the-uvalde-school-shooting-response-a-tragic-timeline-of-events
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (TND) — Parents and community members are being left with more questions than answers as more information about the police response to a mass shooting that killed 19 elementary school students in Uvalde, Texas is released.</p> <p>Authorities said officers entered the school and arrived outside the classroom where the suspect was inside just minutes after he got there. Several officers suffered graze wounds, but the group of officers held outside the room in the hallway for more than an hour until a tactical team arrived.</p> <p>Texas Department of Public Safety director Steven McCraw said the incident commander on the scene, the school district’s police chief Pete Arredondo, thought the suspect was barricaded inside adjoining classrooms and wasn’t a threat anymore despite repeated 911 calls from students and teachers pleading for help.</p> <p><i>“The on-scene commander considered a barricaded subject and that there was time and there were no more children at risk,” McCraw said. “Obviously, obviously, you know, based upon the information we have, there were children in that classroom that were at risk, and it was, in fact, still an active shooter situation and not a barricaded subject.”</i></p> <p>McCraw said it was the “wrong decision” to wait to get inside.</p> <p>State leaders have questioned the decision-making at the scene and made promises to figure out exactly what happened and why.</p> <p>“The bottom line would be: Why did they not choose the strategy that would have been best to get in there and to eliminate the killer and to rescue the children?” Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said.</p> <p>On Friday, McCraw gave the most detailed timeline yet as he tries to answer questions as to why it took so long for police to get in the room. Law enforcement officials have given conflicting information to the public as the small Texas community seeks answers and tries to make sense of the killings.</p>

The Department of Justice announced it would [conduct a rare federal review](#) of the response to the shooting after a request from Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin.

“The goal of the review is to provide an independent account of law enforcement actions and responses that day, and to identify lessons learned and best practices to help first responders prepare for and respond to active shooter events,” the department said in a statement.

The results will likely take months to be released and will be made public. DOJ’s Office of Community Oriented Policing will conduct the review.

Part of what investigators will look to solve is a potential breakdown in communication between 911 call centers and officers at the scene.

Brian Higgins, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a retired police chief who was on and led SWAT teams, said he expects the department’s investigation to be broad and sweeping.

“You had children and teachers from inside the room, calling for help and you had cops outside that door. But what we don't know is, did that information get to those cops, particularly that commander at the door?” Higgins said. “When we train these things in a full-scale exercise, we go from the beginning, the first incident to 911 calls to testing the communication. I think it's going to be a very in-depth investigation.”

At this point, it’s also unknown how the 911 calls were handled by dispatch centers.

“Sometimes the centers, particularly smaller ones that don't get these huge amounts of calls, they're overwhelmed very quickly, so they're just focused on receiving the information. We need to know what they did with that information and then who received it?” Higgins said.

As more information about the delayed encounter with the gunman is released, more questions have come about why decisions were being made. Citing law enforcement officials, The Associated Press reported officers from other agencies asked the school police chief to let them move in as the gunman fired at students.

Audio recordings from the scene captured officers telling the chief the shooter was still active, contradicting the barricaded suspect scenario determining their response, the officials told AP.

If officers standing outside the door were aware there were victims inside or heard more gunshots, they should have expedited their decision to get inside and nullify the gunman, Higgins said.

“As you're getting ready with all the equipment you need, you're getting for that dynamic entry. There's also a hasty response team right at the door, so if shots are fired, you throw all the planning out the window and you go in and you rescue those people,” Higgins said.

Some have questioned why Arredondo remained in charge of the situation as various levels of law enforcement arrived at the scene. By the time the suspect was killed, teams from state and federal agencies were on the scene. The suspect was ultimately killed by Border Patrol tactical officers.

It is generally standard procedure for assisting law enforcement agencies to defer to local authorities, Higgins said. That can differ when specialty agencies like a bomb squad or SWAT team get involved, where the incident commander would then defer to the specialty team leaders for their expertise.

Figuring out if that expertise was given and taken into account will be an important piece of the investigation.

	<p>Putting together a correct timeline of events, decisions and procedures to share with a public trying to understand an incident of mass death with young victims will be crucial to maintaining public trust in law enforcement institutions.</p> <p>Being able to do so quickly will also allow authorities to avoid misinformation from circling.</p> <p>“When you have a crisis, communication is a very critical part of any incident,” Higgins said. “When you have loss of confidence in your messaging, like DPS has right now, what happens is that there's a vacuum created and people are filling it with information that might be rumor, innuendo, guessing. So, they need to really get on top of this.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Shooting in Southcenter mall restaurant
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/shots-fired-inside-cheesecake-factory-tukwila/TKH24SPRHVBB3HM663RXGWB2FE/
GIST	<p>TUKWILA, Wash. — Police responded to a reported shooting at a Cheesecake Factory restaurant located at the Southcenter Mall in Tukwila on Tuesday evening.</p> <p>At about 8:45 p.m., officers were dispatched to the 200 block of Strander Boulevard after receiving reports that a dispute had escalated into gunfire.</p> <p>A Cheesecake Factory employee told KIRO 7 that the shooting happened inside the restaurant.</p> <p>Tukwila police say they believe any parties involved in the dispute fled the scene after the incident.</p> <p>At this time, no suspects have been taken into custody.</p> <p>KIRO 7 is working to confirm if anyone was injured in the shooting.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Texas police: door shut, not locked
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/texas-police-teacher-closed-propped-open-door-before-attack/
GIST	<p>An exterior door at Robb Elementary School did not lock when it was closed by a teacher shortly before a gunman used it to get inside and kill 19 students and two teachers, leaving investigators searching to determine why, state police said Tuesday.</p> <p>State police initially said a teacher had propped the door open shortly before Salvador Ramos, 18, entered the school in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24.</p> <p>They have now determined that the teacher, who has not been identified, propped the door open with a rock, but then removed the rock and closed the door when she realized there was a shooter on campus, said Travis Considine, chief communications officer for the Texas Department of Public Safety. But, Considine said, the door that was designed to lock when shut did not lock.</p> <p>“We did verify she closed the door. The door did not lock. We know that much and now investigators are looking into why it did not lock,” Considine said.</p> <p>Investigators confirmed the detail through additional video footage reviewed since Friday’s news conference when authorities first said that the door had been left propped open. Authorities did not state at that time what had been used to prop open the door.</p> <p>Considine said the teacher initially propped the door open but ran back inside to get her phone and call 911 when Ramos crashed his truck on campus.</p>

“She came back out while on her phone, she heard someone yell, ‘He has a gun!’, she saw him jump the fence and that he had a gun, so she ran back inside,” removing the rock when she did, Considine said.

Steve McCraw, the head of DPS, hadn’t said why the teacher initially propped open the door when it was first detailed Friday. The first mention of a door left propped open, which officials now say didn’t happen, led to questions about the teacher’s actions and whether she had made a horrific mistake.

Since the shooting, law enforcement and state officials have struggled to present an accurate timeline and details of the event and how police responded, sometimes providing conflicting information or withdrawing some statements hours later. State police have said some accounts were preliminary and may change as more witnesses are interviewed.

San Antonio attorney Don Flanary told the San Antonio Express-News that the Robb Elementary School employee, whom he’s not naming, first propped open the door to carry food from a car to a classroom, and that she immediately moved to close it when she realized the danger.

“She kicked the rock away when she went back in. She remembers pulling the door closed while telling 911 that he was shooting,” Flanary told the newspaper.

“She thought the door would lock because that door is always supposed to be locked,” Flanary said.

Flanary did not immediately return telephone messages left at his office from The Associated Press.

Investigators are also still trying to interview Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District Police Chief Pete Arredondo, who state police have said was the commander of the school shooting scene while it happened. Arredondo has not responded to multiple requests for comment from The Associated Press.

McCraw, the head of the Texas Department of Public Safety, has said Arredondo treated the active scene as a hostage situation and as if children were no longer at risk, while 19 police officers waited in the school hallway outside the classroom where Ramos was.

McCraw called that the “wrong decision,” saying the focus of the investigation has shifted to Arredondo and the police response.

Other officers in the Uvalde city and schools police departments continue to sit for interviews and provide statements, but Arredondo has not responded to DPS requests for two days, Considine said.

Later Tuesday, the Combined Law Enforcement Association of Texas, which represents police officers, urged its member officers to cooperate with “all government investigations” into the shooting and police response and endorsed a federal probe already announced by the Justice Department.

The organization was also sharply critical of the constantly changing narrative of events that has emerged so far.

“There has been a great deal of false and misleading information in the aftermath of this tragedy. Some of the information came from the very highest levels of government and law enforcement,” CLEAT said. “Sources that Texans once saw as iron-clad and completely reliable have now been proven false.”

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HEADLINE	05/31 Uvalde anger over school chief's role
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/very-angry-uvalde-locals-grapple-with-school-chiefs-role/
GIST	UVALDE, Texas (AP) — The blame for an excruciating delay in killing the gunman at a Texas elementary school — even as parents outside begged police to rush in and panicked children called 911 from inside — has been placed with the school district’s homegrown police chief.

It's left residents in the small city of Uvalde struggling to reconcile what they know of the well-liked local lawman after the director of state police said that the commander at the scene — Pete Arredondo — made the “wrong decision” last week not to breach a classroom at Robb Elementary School sooner, believing the gunman was barricaded inside and children weren't at risk.

Steven McCraw, the head of the Texas Department of Public Safety, said at the Friday news conference that after following the gunman into the building, officers waited over an hour to breach the classroom. Nineteen children and two teachers were killed in the shooting.

Arredondo, who grew up in Uvalde and graduated from high school here, was elected earlier this month to the Uvalde City Council. A special City Council meeting for him and two re-elected incumbents to take their oaths of office had been set for Tuesday evening, but Mayor Don McLaughlin said Monday that the meeting wouldn't be held. Then the mayor issued a Tuesday evening statement saying no ceremony had been held, but the members were sworn in Tuesday.

The 50-year-old Arredondo has spent much of a nearly 30-year career in law enforcement in Uvalde, returning in 2020 to take the head police job at the school district.

When Arredondo was a boy, Maria Gonzalez used to drive him and her children to the same school where the shooting happened. “He was a good boy,” she said.

“He dropped the ball maybe because he did not have enough experience. Who knows? People are very angry,” Gonzalez said.

Another woman in the neighborhood where Arredondo grew up began sobbing when asked about him. The woman, who didn't want to give her name, said one of her granddaughters was at the school during the shooting but wasn't hurt.

Juan Torres, a U.S. Army veteran who was visibly upset with reports coming out about the response, said he knew Arredondo from high school.

“You sign up to respond to those kinds of situations” Torres said. “If you are scared, then don't be a police officer. Go flip burgers.”

After his election to the non-salaried spot on the City Council, Arredondo told the Uvalde Leader-News earlier this month that he was “ready to hit the ground running.”

“I have plenty of ideas, and I definitely have plenty of drive,” he said, adding he wanted to focus not only on the city being fiscally responsible but also making sure street repairs and beautification projects happen.

At a candidates' forum before his election, Arredondo said: “I guess to me nothing is complicated. Everything has a solution. That solution starts with communication. Communication is key.”

McCraw said Friday that minutes after the gunman entered the school, city police officers entered through the same door. Over the course of more than an hour, law enforcement from multiple agencies arrived on the scene. Finally, officials said, a U.S. Border Patrol tactical team used a janitor's key to unlock the classroom door and kill the gunman.

McCraw said that students and teachers had repeatedly begged 911 operators for help while Arredondo told more than a dozen officers to wait in a hallway. That directive — which goes against established active-shooter protocols — prompted questions about whether more lives were lost because officers didn't act faster.

Two law enforcement officials have said that as the gunman fired at students, law enforcement officers from other agencies urged Arredondo to let them move in because children were in danger. The officials

spoke on condition of anonymity because they had not been authorized to talk publicly about the investigation.

In his Monday statement, McLaughlin, the Uvalde mayor, pushed back on officials' claims, including remarks made over the weekend by Texas' lieutenant governor, that they weren't told the truth about the massacre. McLaughlin said in that statement that local law enforcement hadn't made any public comments about the investigation's specifics or misled anyone.

But in his Tuesday statement, McLaughlin, noting that "emotions are raw, and hearts are broken," said he "misunderstood" statements he thought Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick had said.

Arredondo started out his career in law enforcement working for the Uvalde Police Department. After spending 16 years there, he went to Laredo, a border city located 130 miles (209 kilometers) miles to the south, where he worked at the Webb County Sheriff's Office and then for a local school district, according to a 2020 article in the Uvalde Leader-News on his return to his hometown to take the school district police chief job. The school district's board of trustees approved his appointment to the spot.

According to the Uvalde school district's website, the police force led by Arredondo also has five other officers and a security guard.

Ray Garner, the police chief of the district in Laredo where Arredondo worked, told the San Antonio Express-News in a story published after the Uvalde shooting that when Arredondo worked in the Laredo district he was "easy to talk to" and was concerned about the students.

"He was an excellent officer down here," Garner told the newspaper. "Down here, we do a lot of training on active-shooter scenarios, and he was involved in those."

Arredondo, who spoke only briefly at two short news conferences on the day of the shooting, appeared behind state officials speaking at news conferences over the next two days, but was not present at McCraw's Friday news conference.

After that news conference, members of the media converged at Arredondo's home and police cruisers took up posts there. Arredondo has not responded to multiple requests for comment from The Associated Press.

At one point, a man answering the door at Arredondo's house told a reporter for The Associated Press that Arredondo was "indisposed."

"The truth will come out," said the man before closing the door.

On Tuesday, Travis Considine, chief communications officer for the Texas Department of Public Safety, said Arredondo had not responded to DPS interview requests for two days, Considine said.

State Sen. Roland Gutierrez, a Democrat whose district includes Uvalde, said on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday that he's asking a lot of questions after "so many things went wrong."

He said one family told him that a first responder told them that their child, who was shot in the back, likely bled out. "So, absolutely, these mistakes may have led to the passing away of these children as well," Gutierrez said.

Gutierrez said while the issue of which law enforcement agency had or should have had operational control is a "significant" concern of his, he's also "suggested" to McCraw "that it's not fair to put it on the local (school district) cop."

"At the end of the day, everybody failed here," Gutierrez said.

HEADLINE	05/31 Cities rocked by holiday weekend shootings
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/cities-us-rocked-memorial-day-weekend-shootings/story?id=85083526
GIST	<p>Even as the first funerals of the 21 victims of the Uvalde, Texas, school shooting were commencing, gunfire continued to wreak havoc across the United States over the Memorial Day weekend as police in eight major cities investigated incidents in which three or more people were shot, including 16 children.</p> <p>The gun violence was especially acute in Philadelphia and Chicago, where police departments in both cities dispatched officers to more than 40 shootings between Friday afternoon and Monday night.</p> <p>According to the Gun Violence Archive, a website that keeps track of shootings across the country, there have been 17 episodes across the nation in which four or more people have been shot since the Uvalde mass shooting on May 24.</p> <p>14 fatally shot in Philly</p> <p>At least 14 people, including a 9-year-old boy and his father, were killed in Philadelphia over the holiday weekend.</p> <p>Philadelphia has already recorded 209 homicides this year, just three less than at this time in 2021 -- a year that saw a record 562 homicides, according to Philadelphia Police Department crime statistics.</p> <p>Among those killed this weekend in Philadelphia were 37-year-old Gerald Parks and his 9-year-old son, Jamal. Police said the father and son had just arrived home in the city's Wissinoming section Sunday night when a barrage of gunfire erupted.</p> <p>Parks and his son, who were coming from a holiday cookout, were found dead in their car. No arrests had been made as of Tuesday.</p> <p>In a separate episode Monday evening, one person was killed and another was seriously injured when at least 70 shots were fired in a North Philadelphia neighborhood near Temple University, police said. Apparently several shooters, who remain unidentified and at large, were involved in the incident at about 6:30 p.m. and four guns were found at the scene, according to police.</p> <p>Hours later, more than 40 gunshots rang out at a party in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia, leaving a 16-year-old girl and a 21-year-old woman dead, according to police. Investigators believe that at least two gunmen were involved in the shooting that also left a 14-year-old girl and a 21-year-old man injured. No arrests have been announced.</p> <p>Also on Monday, three people were shot, one fatally, on a street in West Philadelphia, police said. One of the victims shot is believed to be an innocent bystander who was hit by a stray bullet, according to police. The shooting happened around 11 p.m. When officers arrived at the scene, they found a 32-year-old man with multiple gunshot wounds. He was taken to a hospital and pronounced dead.</p> <p>Police also learned a 29-year-old woman who was a passenger in a moving car was hit by a stray bullet and critically injured. The third victim ran and was found shot twice in the leg a few blocks away by officers and paramedics.</p> <p>Police said at least 34 spent shell casings were found at the West Philadelphia crime scene.</p> <p>"This violence must stop. Families and friends are losing loved ones, and our youth are having their lives and potential cut short," Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney tweeted Monday night. "We must all work together to end this heartbreaking, maddening epidemic and make a safer city for everyone."</p> <p>9 killed in Chicago</p> <p>At least 47 people were injured and nine killed in a series of shootings across Chicago over the weekend, according to police.</p>

Five people, including a 16-year-old girl, were shot in one incident in Chicago's West Garfield Park neighborhood early Sunday morning. The shooting occurred during a gathering to commemorate a teenager who was fatally shot two years ago, according to police.

Shell casings from at least three guns, including an AK-47 rifle, were found at the scene, police said. No arrests have been announced.

Also on Sunday, a 69-year-old man was killed and four other people were injured in a shooting that erupted in Chicago's West Humboldt Park neighborhood, police said. Police said the shooting stemmed from a domestic violence incident and that a 23-year-old man who was shot in the foot has been arrested in connection with the incident.

Chicago has recorded 232 homicides this year, a 10% decrease from the same period in 2021, according to police department crime statistics.

The shootings in Chicago this weekend came despite an order canceling days off for police officers over the Memorial Day weekend and the city expanding the hours of a curfew on minors unaccompanied by adults in Millennium Park, a major tourist attraction where a [16-year-old boy was fatally shot](#) two weeks ago.

10 people shot in Charleston

Ten people, including a 17-year-old, were injured in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, late Monday night, including a police officer, [when gunfire erupted](#). The incident remained under investigation Tuesday.

The shooting unfolded at about 11:40 p.m., police said.

In the aftermath of the shooting, several fights broke out and two officers were assaulted, according to police. Two women were arrested and charged with the assaults on the police officers, authorities said.

6 teenagers shot in Chattanooga

[Six teenagers were shot](#) and wounded, two critically, Saturday night when multiple people opened fire in downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee, during a confrontation between two large groups of young people, authorities said.

Chattanooga police officers were patrolling the downtown area at around 11 p.m. when they heard the gunshots and immediately responded to help those injured, Chattanooga Police Chief Celeste Murphy said during a news conference on Sunday.

No arrests have been announced.

7 injured, 1 killed, in shooting at Memorial Day event in Oklahoma

One person was killed and seven were injured after a [shooting broke out](#) during a Memorial Day festival in Oklahoma.

About 1,500 people were in attendance at the festival at the Old City Square in Taft, about 45 miles southeast of Tulsa, when the shooting took place just after midnight Sunday, according to the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation.

A 39-year-old woman was killed in the incident and a 9-year-old child was among those injured, authorities said.

Police said the 26-year-old suspect, Skyler Buckner, turned himself in Sunday afternoon.

4 shot at Houston party

Gunfire erupted at a Houston house party Sunday night, leaving four people wounded, according to the [Harris County Sheriff's Office](#).

All of the victims suffered non-life-threatening injuries. But police said one of the shooting victims hit and killed a motorcyclist while attempting to drive himself to a hospital.

Teenager killed, five injured in Phoenix shooting

An 18-year-old man was fatally shot and five other teenagers were wounded during a [shooting at a house party](#) in Phoenix, Arizona early Sunday.

Police said the wounded victims ranged in age 16 to 18, and all are expected to survive.

No arrests have been announced and police said at least two different guns were used in the shooting.

1 dead, 6 hurt, in Michigan bar shooting

A shooting outside a Michigan bar left a 19-year-old man dead and six other people injured early Sunday morning.

The shooting unfolded around 2:30 a.m. outside the Ajay's Lounge and A and D Liquor Store in Benton Harbor.

Witnesses told ABC affiliate [WBND in South Bend](#), Indiana, that prior to the shooting, a fight broke over a ticketed event Ajay's Lounge in which a rapper people thought was going to perform only made an appearance.

No arrests have been announced in the shooting.

7 hurt in Nevada freeway shooting involving motorcycle gangs

Seven people were injured, two critically, Saturday when [gunfire erupted on a freeway](#) in Henderson, Nevada, police said.

The Henderson Police Department said a preliminary investigation indicates the shooting occurred just before noon on Interstate 95 and stemmed from an altercation between members of rival motorcycle gangs.

Three suspects were identified and arrested on charges of attempted murder, felony battery, conspiracy to commit murder and discharging a gun at occupied vehicles. Police identified the suspects as 66-year-old Richard Devries, 46-year-old Stephen Alo and 26-year-old Russell Smith.

4 people shot in Memphis

Four people were shot Friday night near a rogue car show in Memphis, Tennessee, police said.

One of the people wounded in the shooting was arrested and charged with being a convicted felon in possession of a handgun.

It was unclear if the 27-year-old man taken into custody was involved in the shooting.

Police said the victims all suffered non-life-threatening injuries.

6 shot at Alabama graduation party

Six people, including a 14-year-old child, were injured in a [shooting at a graduation party](#) in Anniston, Alabama, on Friday, police said.

About 150 people were at the party when the shooting broke out in the town about 64 miles east of Birmingham, police said.

Investigators said they recovered dozens of shell casings at the scene and that multiple cars in the area were struck by gunfire.

No arrests were announced.

Florida house party shooting leaves 4 wounded

[Four teenagers were shot](#) when a fight broke out at a house party in Malabar, Florida, on Saturday night, according to the Brevard County Sheriff's Office.

The shooting erupted just before midnight in the city about 77 miles southwest of Orlando, authorities said.

The victims ranged in age from 15 to 18 and all suffered non-life-threatening injuries, the sheriff's office said.

No arrests have been announced.

1 killed, 3 injured in Fresno, California

A teenager was killed and three others were injured in a [shooting near a park in downtown Fresno](#), California, on Friday, police said.

The shooting started about 9 p.m. near Radio Park and left a 17-year-old boy dead. A 15-year-old boy and two 16-year-olds were wounded in the shooting, according to the Fresno Police Department.

The injured victims are all expected to survive, police said.

No arrests have been made.

1 dead, 3 injured in Colorado Springs

An 18-year-old man was killed and three 18-year-old women were wounded in a drive-by shooting early Friday in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The victims were standing in the parking lot of a bar around 1:15 a.m. when gunfire erupted from a passing car, police said.

No arrests have been announced.

A mother, 3 children fatally shot in Michigan

A 40-year-old mother and her three children -- ages 6, 4 and 3 -- were allegedly shot to death on Friday by the stepfather of the children, police said.

The quadruple homicide occurred at a house in Austin Township, Michigan, north of Grand Rapids, according to the Mecosta County Sheriff's Office.

The stepfather of the children, identified by relatives as Charles Gillard, 51, is suspected of committing the killings around 2:30 p.m. Friday, according to the sheriff's office.

Charles Gillard was found with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head and was in critical condition at a hospital on Tuesday, the sheriff's office said.

Relatives identified the victims as Dawn Gillard and her children, 6-year-old Katelynn, 4-year-old Ronald, and 3-year-old Joshua.

"I am in total shock. I am so devastated," Hailey Salisbury, the daughter of Dawn Gillard's daughter and the half-sister to the young children who were killed, told ABC affiliate station [WZZM in Grand Rapids](#).

HEADLINE	05/31 Police: Hells Angels ambush Vagos bikers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/police-report-describes-vagos-bikers-ambush-hells-angels-85096748
GIST	<p>LAS VEGAS -- A Memorial Day weekend shooting on a Las Vegas-area freeway was an apparent ambush by Hells Angels members on rival Vagos biker gang members returning from a veterans cemetery ride, according to a police report made public Tuesday.</p> <p>Richard John Devries, who police identified as the Las Vegas Hells Angels chapter president, and club recruits Russell Smith and Stephen Alo were arrested late Sunday, several hours after the shooting on U.S. 95, according to Henderson police reports.</p> <p>At least six of the seven people taken to hospitals with wounds or injuries following the midday Sunday gunfire were Vagos members or affiliates, the report said. They were riding motorcycles back to Las Vegas after stops at Hoover Dam and the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City.</p> <p>A person whom police identified as an anonymous witness provided video showing three men wearing Hells Angels attire riding up to the Vagos group — including one who appeared to have an object in his left hand — before shots were fired.</p> <p>Police said “multiple” spent bullet casings were found strewn for more than a mile (1.6 kilometer) along the freeway.</p> <p>It was not clear from the police narrative if anyone in the Vagos group fired weapons, or if all the people who were reported injured received gunshot wounds.</p> <p>Two were hospitalized in critical condition, according to a police statement issued Monday that said a seventh person involved in the shooting arrived at a hospital with injuries that were not considered life-threatening.</p> <p>Police on Tuesday did not provide an update of the conditions of the injured.</p> <p>Devries, 66; Smith, 46; and Alo, 26, remained jailed on \$380,000 bail pending court appearances on multiple attempted murder, conspiracy, battery and weapon charges.</p> <p>Jail and court records did not immediately reflect court dates or if the men had attorneys who could speak on their behalf. Several attorneys who have represented Hells Angels and Vagos members in criminal cases in Las Vegas in recent years did not immediately respond to messages from The Associated Press.</p> <p>The freeway remained closed for more five hours during an investigation also involving Las Vegas and Boulder City police and the Nevada Highway Patrol, according to the Henderson police reports.</p> <p>Police said video obtained Sunday morning at a coffee shop in Boulder City and later from a dashboard camera of a police vehicle on a highway in Boulder City showed Devries, Smith and Alo among “multiple members of the Hells Angels ... prior to the shooting call.”</p> <p>Cellphone GPS location data put the three men together on U.S. 95 after the shooting, the reports said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle parking enforcement RV dwellers
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/seattle-to-increase-parking-enforcement-aimed-at-rv-dwellers/
GIST	In the past year, there have been two false alarms at the RV encampment along Southwest Andover Street in West Seattle.

Each time, officials placed red “no parking” signs and pasted bright orange notices to windshields, warning that the vehicles were at risk of being impounded if they weren’t moved, said Garth Carroll, also known as Gizmo.

Carroll has lived on the street for more than two years, since Seattle stopped enforcing the rule that vehicles can only be parked on the same block for 72 hours because of pandemic concerns. In October, the city resumed enforcement, but it said that city crews would provide warnings and education before more serious consequences.

Since then, the Seattle Department of Transportation has issued about 3,350 citations and impounded 1,700 vehicles.

This month, the Seattle Department of Transportation announced that the city will resume “full parking enforcement” for any vehicle that has not moved for longer than 72 hours and return to pre-pandemic standards.

“Public streets are not an appropriate place for long-term vehicle storage,” the announcement said.

Around Thanksgiving of last year and recently last month, Carroll’s RV was tagged with the familiar orange sticker and Carroll braced for the worst. But both times, no one said he had to leave.

Recently, Carroll has heard the rules around towing vehicles have changed, but largely he is confused given the false alarms.

“It creates a whole tsunami of panic and fear and worry and feeling threatened and terrorized by parking enforcement or the city,” he said. “We’re afraid of losing everything, our home, our property, our tools.”

Other RV encampments across the city also have recently seen “no parking” signs and orange stickers in recent weeks and other people have been similarly confused, trying to navigate where exactly parking enforcement stands on the issue, said Bill Kirlin-Hackett, the director of the Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness, which now runs the Vehicle Residency Outreach Program/Scofflaw Mitigation.

When enforcement resumed in October, it was [unclear at the time](#) what that would mean for people living out of the vehicles after a [Washington Supreme Court ruling](#) in 2021 that said impounding and auctioning off a vehicle that someone lives in was a violation of a frontier-era law called the Homestead Act.

At first, the city said it would focus on towing only vehicles that were unoccupied and presented a hazard, such as leaking sewage or fire risk.

Now, city transportation officials say the ruling still allows the city to impound illegally parked vehicles but prevents them from charging an “excessive fee” if the owner lives in the vehicle.

Advocates say they are frustrated by a lack of clear communication on how consistently the city intends to enforce the 72-hour rule and whether that means impounding RVs. Advocates also say that even with the legal ruling, the rules around impounding vehicles still criminalize homelessness and prevent people from fully recovering their vehicles.

“It’s just a giant mess, and nobody’s running the ship,” Kirlin-Hackett said. “Everybody is doing their best not to address the Supreme Court rule. They’re doing their best to make it very confusing around the 72-hour rule.”

Jamie Housen, spokesperson for Mayor Bruce Harrell, said the city still provides warnings before moving to ticketing and impounding vehicles. Impoundment is only used as a last resort if someone “ignores the warnings and refuses to temporarily move.”

“If a person is living in a vehicle, then we will make multiple attempts to notify or talk to that person to encourage them to move their vehicle,” Housen said in an email.

Seattle has scheduled six removals of RV encampments throughout June in North Lake, Ballard, Georgetown and in West Seattle along the street Carroll is now parked, according to the Vehicle Residency Outreach Program.

Since moving to Southwest Andover Street, Carroll has accumulated a box truck, where he stores his tools, a vehicle he’s fixing up and two other small vehicles that he intends to eventually sell — in addition to the RV he lives out of.

Carroll said he has gotten to know his homeless neighbors, who keep an eye on his stuff when he’s away picking up groceries or getting water.

Carroll’s RV now runs but isn’t drivable partially because of the weight of a battery bank and a tarp fixed to the top to prevent leaks, he said.

In the past two years, car and RV encampments have become somewhat permanent features in some neighborhoods, drawing ire from locals and business owners both as an eyesore and as a source of property crime.

JW Harvey, one of the owners of the Orcas Business Park in Georgetown, said he and his 70 tenants have struggled with break-ins, catalytic converter theft and siphoned gas for more than 10 years. After installing nearly 30 security cameras, Harvey said it could not be clearer to him that the local homeless population is the cause.

The issue has gotten particularly worse during the pandemic, he said.

Harvey said he often lends the RV residents outside his business tools to fix their vehicles, provides water, and has in the past towed people’s vehicles to different blocks to help them avoid impoundment. However, Harvey said he needs the city to do more to help businesses like his.

“I think it’s a step in the right direction. I am glad that they’re bringing [the 72-hour parking rule] back so at least something can be done,” he said.

In Seattle, vehicles over 80 inches wide cannot park overnight on any street unless they are in an area zoned for industrial use, like in parts of Ballard, Interbay, Sodo and Georgetown.

Before the pandemic, people living out of their vehicles moved around regularly because of the 72-hour rule, but since then, many vehicles haven’t moved in months or years. In some cases, vehicles are still running or only need minor repairs. In other cases, the vehicles are completely inoperable or hazardous because of mold or pests.

The city facilitates a pump-out program and a trash pickup service for RV encampments, which has shown success at reducing sewage spills onto city streets. But there are still few services targeted to people living in vehicles.

Within that group, there are diverse needs. People who live in cars are often newly homeless, and more eager to stay in shelters than people who live in RVs, said Maureen Ewing, the executive director of the University Heights Center, which serves as the fiscal sponsor for the Vehicle Outreach Program. RV dwellers are more resistant to staying in shelters where they cannot store all their belongings and tend to have been homeless longer.

Kirlin-Hackett, of the Scofflaw Mitigation Team, is one of the few people focused on helping this population. He said the city’s parking enforcement system is cumbersome for homeless people.

	<p>If a vehicle is towed, the owner can request a Seattle Municipal Court hearing within 10 days to contest the action or request a payment plan.</p> <p>The vehicle can still be auctioned if the owner does not contact transportation department contractor Lincoln Towing about an expedited hearing or if the court determines the impound was proper and storage fees were appropriate and the owner is unable to pay.</p> <p>People can also request to collect belongings from the vehicle if they contact Lincoln Towing within 20 days of the impoundment.</p> <p>But, Kirlin-Hackett said that in his experience, even when people contest excessive fines in court, judges do not always consistently forgive fines.</p> <p>The King County Regional Homelessness Authority wants to use \$1.9 million allocated by the Seattle City Council to create a safe lot for oversized vehicles to park during the day and overnight, with services to connect vehicle dwellers to permanent housing as well as showers and restrooms.</p> <p>The authority hopes to award the contract by early June, homelessness authority spokesperson Anne Martens said.</p> <p>The authority is also requesting an additional \$5 million in its 2023 budget for additional safe parking for about 130 vehicles, which could serve RVs or passenger vehicles depending on need, Martens said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 WSP emphasis: secure vehicle loads
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/state-patrol-launching-major-effort-make-sure-drivers-loads-are-secured/OG5FHVQMPFCKXARQSGBDZPKJE/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — The Washington State Patrol is launching a new effort to keep the state’s roadways safer by educating drivers on the importance of making sure their loads are secured.</p> <p>WSP is reminding drivers to secure their cargo and keep anything from flying off their vehicles, which could result in litter scattered on roads or even the death of another driver.</p> <p>In March, a 20-year-old from Edmonds was killed after slamming into a mattress which fell out of a truck on Interstate 5 near Mountlake Terrace.</p> <p>“We’ve already had two deaths ... directly as a result of lost loads here in the state of Washington this year, and obviously numerous collisions,” said WSP Trooper Darren Wright. “And litter on the side of the roads just makes our beautiful state look just horrible.”</p> <p>In 2004, 24-year-old Maria Federici was hit by a wooden board that flew off the back of a trailer, crushing her face and leaving her blind and disfigured.</p> <p>Until Maria’s Law was passed two years later, the driver who lost that unsecured load could not be prosecuted for causing her injuries.</p> <p>Troopers say Maria’s Law is always enforced, but more officers will now be asked to focus on any load which appears loose or unsecured.</p> <p>The state patrol will be running emphasis patrols for three weekends in a row, starting on June 10.</p> <p>Troopers will be specifically looking for drivers hauling loose loads and any cases of objects littering the road.</p>

	Depending on how dangerous the situation is, a driver can get anything ranging from a warning to jail time. Even tossing a cigarette out the window of a car can lead to a \$1,000 fine.
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HEADLINE	05/31 WSP: nearly 1,000 drivers refuse to stop
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/nearly-1000-drivers-refused-stop-wsp-troopers/GFH5BNEYM5EMLBDYB2ZHLCE7U/
GIST	<p>FEDERAL WAY, Wash. — The Washington State Patrol says nearly a thousand drivers refused to stop on the state’s highways during the first five months of this year.</p> <p>They are essentially ignoring the troopers’ lights and sirens.</p> <p>Some blame a new law that stiffened requirements for police to pursue drivers they suspect of doing something wrong.</p> <p>But those who support the new law say it is saving lives.</p> <p>The law says the driver must be wanted for something other than, for example, an expired license tab.</p> <p>In fact, they have to have probable cause to believe a violent felony has been committed or that the driver is seriously impaired.</p> <p>Since the law went into effect, hundreds of drivers on the state’s highways have apparently kept going when troopers have tried to stop them.</p> <p>It happened on Memorial Day. Police officers chased a driver through Kent and into Federal Way. It ended with the suspect in custody.</p> <p>But these pursuits are happening less often because of a new state law.</p> <p>“We’ve had 934 people between January 1 and May 17 this year statewide that have failed to stop for a traffic,” said Sgt. Darren Wright, a spokesman for the Washington State Patrol.</p> <p>They are not stopping despite the police lights.</p> <p>“That’s correct,” said Sgt. Wright.</p> <p>Sgt. Wright also says troopers aren’t trying to stop fleeing drivers because of the strict new guidelines under House Bill 1054 passed last year.</p> <p>“The new law says that unless somebody you have probable cause for a violent felony, which is things like murder, rape, armed robbery, things like that,” said Sgt. Wright. “Or we have reasonable suspicion that there is an impairment.”</p> <p>And even then, a supervisor has to approve the chase.</p> <p>“What I hadn’t understood before looking into the data was how common this is,” said Dr. Martina Morris.</p> <p>A statistician, she provided the data for the new law.</p> <p>“Active vehicle pursuits are the second most common cause of death in police encounters here in Washington State,” said Dr. Morris. “And half of the people killed are bystanders and passengers.”</p> <p>And it can happen even once police break off the pursuit.</p>

	<p>Seventy-four-year-old Robert Mauzey of SeaTac was struck and killed nearly two years ago by a driver still fleeing despite the state trooper having stopped the pursuit.</p> <p>Dr. Morris calculates that in all 71 people have been killed because of pursuits since 2015 in this state alone.</p> <p>“The risk is not balanced by the need to apprehend,” said Dr. Morris.</p> <p>She says in the 12 months before the new law took effect, 11 people died in active vehicle pursuits. Since the new law took effect, just one person – a bystander – has died.</p> <p>And Sgt. Wright says troopers will continue to follow the law and chase after drivers only if they meet the new criteria.</p> <p>He says it is a felony to ignore law enforcement’s signal to stop.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle PD: 10 gun-related incidents 2 days
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/seattle-police-investigating-ten-shootings-gunfire-within-two-days/281-69bf378b-82bb-43ab-9692-b2b1c6a83360
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Seattle police are investigating two shootings and eight incidents of gunfire in just two days’ time.</p> <p>A 58-year-old man was in court Tuesday afternoon in connection to a shooting on Sunday night. He was arrested for allegedly prowling homes in a north Capitol Hill neighborhood, and firing shots at officers. No one was hurt.</p> <p>It's one of the 10 cases police are investigating that happened over the weekend. Citywide, there were two separate shootings that left two men injured and eight other incidents involving gunfire.</p> <p>Victoria Beach, the chair of the African American Community Advisory Council, says what happened over the weekend worries her.</p> <p>“I've been on my block 41 years, and we never had this problem. Never,” Beach said. “This isn't the city I grew up in.”</p> <p>According to the Seattle Police Department, shootings and shots fired is a problem that's been on the rise. There were 612 verified shooting events citywide last year. That's a 40% increase compared to 2020.</p> <p>“I take phone calls at 11:30 at night and I'm overwhelmed,” said Beach.</p> <p>She says in her position as chair of the advisory council, she frequently receives calls from families deeply impacted by gun violence.</p> <p>"I wish the kids or people who are doing the gun violence can hear the parents, weep not cry. The weeping is horrific. Their lives are changed forever,” said Beach. “I don't know the solution. I don't know if the city has a solution. But we better get on it because there's going to be, I feel, a lot of lives lost.”</p> <p>Mayor Bruce Harrell said on Tuesday that he is working with his public safety team on strategies and wants to look at the data in all of these kinds of cases to see what more the city can do.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Schools receive threats on social media
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/two-local-schools-receive-social-media-threat-gresham-vancouver-centennial-wayeast

GIST	<p>Students and staff of at least two schools received threats on social media on Tuesday.</p> <p>Centennial High School was placed in a secure protocol just after 8:20 a.m. due to a threat reportedly posted on social media. That means exterior doors stay locked, but operations inside continue as usual.</p> <p>Gresham police responded and gave the all-clear just before 9 a.m.</p> <p>Out of an abundance of caution, they have increased the security presence on campus.</p> <p>"The security of our schools depends on all of us working together, and we want to thank the individuals for bringing this to our attention, so we could take the appropriate action immediately. We appreciate our local law enforcement for working with us towards maintaining a safe and secure campus," Principal Mairi Scott-Aguirre wrote in a message to families.</p> <p>Wy'East Middle School in Vancouver also received a threat on social media on Tuesday.</p> <p>Vancouver police investigated and spoke with the person who shared the post and said the threat was not credible.</p> <p>They also have extra security Tuesday as a precaution.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle eyes rising crime homeless camps
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/families-businesses-across-seattle-hope-mayor-harrells-safety-plan-works-quickly
GIST	<p>SEATTLE—Rising crime in and around Seattle’s homeless encampments was one of the big reasons for Mayor Bruce Harrell releasing his ambitious plan to address the crisis.</p> <p>Today, he acknowledged serious safety issues at homeless camps and released startling new numbers showing thousands of emergency calls, hundreds of fires, and dozens of shootings.</p> <p>Some residents living near a troubled RV encampment in West Seattle said they feel caught in a vicious cycle.</p> <p>There have been two shootings in less than months at the troubled RV encampment along SW Andover Street—which is just a few feet from Amanda Smith’s home.</p> <p>“It’s a very frustrating situation. We’re constantly on guard, it keeps us up at night,” said Smith. “They were looking for the gun in our bushes right here, right in front of our home.”</p> <p>For the last two years, the family said they have dealt with break-ins, stolen cars, stolen bikes, and harassment, which have left the family feeling under siege in their own neighborhood.</p> <p>“We don’t even leave our house anymore because we feel trapped here because we’re afraid they’re going to break into our house when we leave,” said Smith.</p> <p>She was anxiously waiting to hear about Mayor Harrell’s bigger homeless plan—after he tied rising crime to encampments back in April.</p> <p>“I’m very sensitive to the homeless crisis but I want to feel safe in my neighborhood again. I would like action,” said Smith. “I feel like we have reached out to a lot of officials and they’re always passing the buck to someone else.”</p> <p>Today, when Mayor Harrell unveiled his bigger homeless plan that includes a new public dashboard of data, he acknowledged the numbers on crime and encampments don’t lie.</p>

“We can’t hide from this reality,” Mayor Harrell said.

The mayor says from this January to April, the city responded to 3707 emergency calls or 31 per day.

There were 608 fires—or five each day, and over 50 shootings involved a homeless victim or offender.

To address the concern about RVS, the mayor’s office said it would crackdown on the 72 parking rule.

“But I fully acknowledge that it’s a serious problem,” added Mayor Harrell. “In my mind it’s intolerable. It’s intolerable for those being forced to live in an RV and for those who live in the areas where it’s affected their quality of life.”

He said there’s still a bigger public safety plan he promises to reveal in a few weeks.

“What I want is a true public safety plan because there is a correlation as I described between public safety and homelessness that I have to address looking at the data,” said Mayor Harrell.

The public safety plan is long overdue for families and businesses in SODO too—where KOMO News showed you a brutal stabbing attack, two women were violently raped, and a man was attacked with ax—all at three different encampments.

Erin Goodman, Executive Director for the SODO Business Improvement Area has been pushing for action for years.

“I do feel heard,” said Goodman. “But we have a new administration that’s in the process of building out their program and it can’t come fast enough for us. We need it yesterday.”

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HEADLINE	05/31 Uvalde school shooting: bad to worse
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/full-victims-video-appears-show-texas-911-dispatchers/story?id=85077976
GIST	<p>Video obtained by ABC News, taken outside Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, as last week's massacre was unfolding inside, appears to capture a 911 dispatcher alerting officers on scene that they were receiving calls from children who were alive inside the classroom that the gunman had entered -- as law enforcement continued to wait nearly an hour and a half to enter the room.</p> <p>"Child is advising he is in the room, full of victims," the dispatcher can be heard saying in the video. "Full of victims at this moment."</p> <p>"Is anybody inside of the building at this...?" the dispatcher asked.</p> <p>Minutes later, the dispatcher says again: "Eight to nine children."</p> <p>The video, obtained by ABC News, also shows police rescuing children from inside the school by breaking through a window and pulling them out, and also leading them out the back door to safety.</p> <p>Early on, an officer can be heard warning bystanders to stay back because there is a man with a rifle.</p> <p>Minutes later, what appear to be gunshots are heard ringing out.</p> <p>The video, which appears to show some of what took place outside the school, raises new questions about law enforcement's response to one of the nation's deadliest school shootings, which left 19 children and two teachers dead.</p>

The gunman was left inside the classroom for 77 minutes as 19 officers waited in the hallway -- and many more waited outside the building -- after the incident commander wrongly believed the situation had transitioned from an active shooter to a barricaded subject, law enforcement has said.

Federal officers ultimately decided to enter the building and killed the gunman, according to law enforcement sources.

At a news conference Friday, Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steven McGraw said children inside the classroom had called 911 a number of times begging for them to "please send police now." It appeared that information may not have been relayed to officers on the ground, he said.

"That question will be answered," McGraw said when asked directly if the incident commander on the ground received the 911 information. "I'm not going to share the information we have right now. Because I don't have -- I don't have the detailed interview right now."

But the video obtained by ABC News, taken just outside the premises, appears to show that 911 dispatchers were relaying the information -- including information that the room was "full of victims." It is not clear who on scene, if anyone, heard the calls coming in from the dispatchers.

"Advise we do have a child on the line," an apparent dispatcher can be heard saying in the video.

The dispatcher's information heard on the video appears to match the readout of the 911 calls provided last week by law enforcement officials. McGraw said a child had called 911 saying she was in room 112 and had "advised there were multiple dead."

Later, McGraw said, "she called back and said there's eight to nine students alive."

More than one of the children who dialed 911 from inside the classroom survived, McGraw said on Friday.

The Department of Justice on Sunday announced it would be conducting a "fair, transparent, and independent" review of the law enforcement response to the shooting. The findings of the review, the department said, would be published in a report and made available to the public.

"The goal of the review is to provide an independent account of law enforcement actions and responses that day, and to identify lessons learned and best practices to help first responders prepare for and respond to active shooter events," DOJ said in its release.

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